



SCHOOL of
GRADUATE STUDIES

EAST TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY

East Tennessee State University
**Digital Commons @ East
Tennessee State University**

Electronic Theses and Dissertations

Student Works

8-2005

To See Her Face, To Hear Her Voice: Profiling the Place of Women in Early Upper East Tennessee, 1773-1810.

SΣndra Lee Allen Henson
East Tennessee State University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://dc.etsu.edu/etd>



Part of the [Liberal Studies Commons](#), and the [Women's Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Henson, SΣndra Lee Allen, "To See Her Face, To Hear Her Voice: Profiling the Place of Women in Early Upper East Tennessee, 1773-1810." (2005). *Electronic Theses and Dissertations*. Paper 1051. <https://dc.etsu.edu/etd/1051>

This Thesis - Open Access is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Works at Digital Commons @ East Tennessee State University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Electronic Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ East Tennessee State University. For more information, please contact digilib@etsu.edu.

To See Her Face, To Hear Her Voice: Profiling the Place of Women in Early Upper East

Tennessee, 1773-1810

A thesis

presented to

the faculty of the Department of Cross Disciplinary Studies

East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Master of Arts in Liberal Studies

by

Sandra Lee Allen Henson

August 2005

Professor Dale Schmitt, Chair

Professor Marie Tedesco

Norma Myers

Keywords: Women, Eighteenth Century, Backcountry, Feme Covert, Patriarchy

ABSTRACT

To See Her Face, To Hear Her Voice: Profiling the Place of Women in Early Upper East

Tennessee, 1773-1810

by

Sandra Lee Allen Henson

Following the Proclamation Act of 1763 growing numbers of colonists arrived in upper East Tennessee to settle and build wherever they could make arrangements with local groups of Cherokee. While these first families were occupied with survival, the British colonies continued to thrive. Concurrent with growing prosperity was the increasing determination of colonists to exercise control over their property and economic interests. Frontier exigencies affected family strategies for dividing labor and creating economic endeavors. A commonly held view asserts that where women were scarce and needed, rigid sex-role distinctions could not prevail. This thesis will present research of the earliest Washington County Court records and other primary evidence from the late eighteenth-century through the early Republic period to examine the place of women in the upper East Tennessee frontier and argue that despite frontier conditions the underlying attitudes about women did not change.

Copyright 2005 by Sandra Lee Allen Henson

All Rights Reserved

DEDICATION

To Ann Cameron MacRae

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Without the support and encouragement of family and friends this work would not be possible.

Without honest critics it would not be worthwhile. Thank you, all.

CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT	2
COPYRIGHT	3
DEDICATION	4
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	5
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION	7
2. COVERED WITH A WHITE MIST OF CLOUDS	10
3. WORK ALWAYS, WORSHIP OFTEN, DANCE WHEN YOU CAN	23
4. "NOTHING DURING COVERTURE:" WIVES AND PROPERTY	39
5. WOMEN'S VOICES IN WRITTEN RECORDS: COURT CASES, NEWSPAPERS, AND STORE ACCOUNTS, 1773-1809	55
6. CONCLUSION	73
BIBLIOGRAPHY	77
VITA	84

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

“It is to be remarked that, Mrs. Peyton who was the night before delivered of an infant which was unfortunately killed in the hurry and confusion consequent upon such a disaster, assisted them, being frequently exposed to wet and cold then and afterwards, and that her health appears to be good at this time, & I think & hope she will do well.”¹

In John Donelson’s tribute to a brave pioneer mother he acknowledged her help in withstanding an Indian attack, recognized her personal suffering, and expressed concern for her health. She is only identified by her husband’s name; however, she is Mrs. Peyton. Donelson also records the name of Mrs. Jennings and mentions the “negro woman” who during the same attack “succeeded in unloading the boat . . . who got out of the boat, and shoved her off.” The white women are identified in relationship to their husbands, the black woman is not identified except by gender. None of these women are customarily mentioned in Tennessee history in spite of the fact John Donelson’s famous journey down the Holston and Tennessee Rivers up the Cumberland River to the place that became Nashville ranks as one of the most significant endeavors in the settlement of the Southwest Territory.

When Catherine “Bonnie Kate” Sherrill went out to milk the cows in July 1776, an Indian attack sent her running back to the fort at Sycamore Shoals. The gate was already barred and John Sevier pulled her to safety as she scrambled up the outer wall. Other than saving herself Bonnie Kate’s actions were not heroic. Today her statue stands on the grounds of the Capitol building in Nashville. Her given name, her nickname, and her married name are well known to the

¹John Donelson, “John Donelson’s Journal” in *Three Pioneer Tennessee Documents*, (Nashville: The Tennessee Historical Commission, 1964), 6.

schoolchildren of Tennessee. Catherine “Bonnie Kate” Sherrill married John Sevier, leader, general, and ultimately governor of the state, several years after the events of July 1776.²

The way in which history has remembered the women involved in these two incidents tells us about the place of women at that time. It illustrates the attitudes men had about women and confirms the generally accepted belief that women derived their identities through the men to whom they were attached. In a paradoxical dichotomy women can be doomed to anonymity or propelled to fame not on the basis of their character or bravery but on the basis of their husband’s standing in the community.

In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries women lived in a patriarchally constructed world. Married women were subsumed in their husbands and single women also functioned within a household, usually under the headship of a male relative. Women were daughters, wives, mothers, sisters, grandmothers, even sometimes great grandmothers. Women were rarely seen as persons in their own right.³ This reality makes it difficult to find the faces and voices of women in the past. It is especially difficult in upper East Tennessee. Few of the women who came were literate, accounts written by men rarely dealt with things related to women, and some of the public documents that might be helpful are not reasonably accessible or have been lost. This thesis is the result of “fishing expeditions” in places where information by or about women could be found. Although Native American and African American women, both slave and free, were a part of life in upper East Tennessee, this thesis focuses on the world of white women, those who appear in a group of wills, selected court documents, newspaper announcements, and store account books.

²Samuel C. Williams, *Ann Robertson: An Unsung Tennessee Heroine*, (Nashville: The Tennessee Historical Commission, 1944), 3; and John R. Finger, *Tennessee Frontiers: Three Regions in Transition*, (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2001), 64, 67, 111, 126, 164, 188.

³Mary Beth Norton, *Founding Mothers & Fathers: Gendered Power and the Forming of American Society*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1997), 1-14.

The bits and pieces of data in these records are examined, analyzed, and placed within the context of the eighteenth-century, patriarchal world that shaped the early Tennessee frontier.

CHAPTER 2

COVERED WITH A WHITE MIST OF CLOUDS

“We ask the questions of the past we want answered in the present.”¹

Unaka is a Cherokee word meaning “covered with a white mist of clouds.” These white mists of clouds are an integral part of nature’s rhythm in upper East Tennessee. They shroud the surface of the land, moving and lifting at times to permit a glimpse at what lies below. They are an apt description of the problem faced by historians looking back through the centuries for clues that would reveal the profile of the European women who came and settled during the early frontier period. Gathering glimpses left in public records and evaluating them in light of what has been learned about similar places and situations, the curious and the patient learn a little more. Some evidence, records written by men, reveals the face of women, the view others have of her. Less evidence, written by women, or by men describing the actions women took in the public arena, allow her voice to be heard.

Scattered among the extant accounts are stories of women who survived the turbulent first years and became heroines of Tennessee’s early history. Surviving capture, scaling walls, and pouring boiling washday water on Indian attackers, they deserve their status as legends.² Beyond these accounts of heroism in crisis situations there is little to enlighten us about the everyday lives of the ordinary white women who, shoulder to shoulder with their husbands, cleared land, built homes, established farms, and raised families.

¹Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Patriarchy*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 15.

²John Anthony Caruso, *The Appalachian Frontier: America's First Surge Westward* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee, 2003), 114-115.

As economic development flourished throughout the colonies, it precipitated significant changes in traditional family, household, and market economies. Frontier exigencies affected family strategies for dividing labor and creating economic endeavors within the household. Accepted wisdom says that where women were scarce and needed to sustain the growing settlements rigid sex-role distinctions could not prevail. The frontier environment altered the negotiation of gender and class in economic and social contexts. Women in the upper East Tennessee frontier reflected the patterns evidenced in other frontier situations. This thesis will present research from court records, newspapers, and store account books to examine the place of women in early upper East Tennessee. It will also discuss the historiography concerning the nature of the frontier and the role of women in the late colonial period and argue that despite frontier conditions and the growth of democratic and republican ideals, underlying attitudes about women, based on a patriarchal construct, did not change. This patriarchy, while mediated by circumstances through the years and interpreted through various cultural grids, was, nevertheless, a concept, a belief system, and a way of ordering human society with millennia-deep roots. It was born in Judeo-Christian doctrine, it flourished in Western European religion, both Roman Catholic and all the Protestant sects, it formed the basis of English Common Law as it applied to men, women, marriage, children, and property law, and it formed the paradigm of the eighteenth-century family.³

The Unaka mountains form the eastern border of Tennessee. During the Alleghanian orogeny when North America collided with Africa, thousands of feet of rock folded upward like a rug pushed from one end to form this part of the great Appalachian system. The Unakas rise to

³See Lerner, *The Creation of Patriarchy*; Edmund S. Morgan, *The Puritan Family: Religion & Domestic Relations in Seventeenth Century New England*, (Boston: The Boston Public Library, 1944; revised and expanded, New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1966); Norton, *Founding Mothers*; Carole Shammas, "Anglo-American Household Government in Comparative Perspective," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 52(January 1995): 1040144; Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800*, Abridged Edition (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1977).

more than six thousand feet and are covered with deciduous hardwoods, areas of balds, and many coves. Although their natural beauty is spectacular, early settlers preferred the gentler ridges and valleys just to their west. Here in what is commonly known as the Great Valley of East Tennessee, the towns of Bristol, Elizabethton, Johnson City, Kingsport, Greeneville, and Jonesborough comprise the heart of the area that was Washington County in the early frontier period.⁴

Although Tennessee's frontier era might arguably date from Hernando de Soto's initial incursions in 1540, the era of frontier settlement that this thesis examines begins at the close of the French and Indian War (1763) when the balance of power in the region shifted dramatically. It continues through the first decade of the nineteenth century when upper East Tennessee, though still a frontier environment in many respects, was part of the new American Republic, a state within the United States, with a stable government and firm economic ties to markets in the east.

Until the Proclamation of 1763 specifically forbade migration by colonists into the Trans Appalachian west, upper East Tennessee was the province of the Cherokee, of intrepid men who traded Indian furs for European trade goods, and of long hunters and explorers who sought riches through land speculation. As a peripheral region of Virginia, Georgia, and the Carolinas it served for more than a century as a buffer zone for the British against the French and Spanish. These European powers, struggling for control in worldwide market systems, developed trade networks with Native Americans of the Ohio and Mississippi Valleys and the Southern Appalachians that linked them to this wider world.⁵ The Cherokee, for example, supplied deerskins, slaves,

⁴Terry Weeks and Bob Womack, *Tennessee: The History of an American State* (Montgomery, Alabama: Clairmont Press, 1996), 10; John R. Finger, *Tennessee Frontiers: Three Regions in Transition* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2001), xix

⁵Gregory H. Nobles, "Breaking into the Backcountry: New Approaches to the Early American Frontier, 1750-1800," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 46 (October 1989): 645-64; See also John C Inscoe's introduction to John Anthony Caruso, *The Appalachian Frontier: America's First Surge Westward* (Knoxville: University of

marketable herbs, and clay used in the manufacture of Wedgewood porcelain to England in exchange for woolens, clothing, iron tools, guns, and rum. The British successfully manipulated the situation by taking every advantage in trading agreements and fomenting warfare between the Cherokee and other southern tribes.⁶ Following the French and Indian War the British planned to maintain control in the region by placating the Indians through trade and protecting them from land-hungry colonists. The policy failed quickly and completely as growing numbers of settlers, moving ever westward, descended through the Shenandoah Valley, or crossed the Unakas into the interstice that is upper East Tennessee⁷.

While during the first decades of settlement these first families were occupied with survival, the British colonies in general, and the cities along the Atlantic seaboard in particular, continued to thrive. Concurrent with growing prosperity was the increasing determination of colonists to exercise control over their property and economic interests.

In the heroine stories of the early years we see women demonstrating the same sort of strength, bravery, and cunning as did men when life was all about survival. To explore the place of women from these early days through the first years of the new republic it is necessary to examine both the scarce written records of the eighteenth century and the relevant conceptual perspectives of the twentieth century. Two significant historical theories that influenced the

Tennessee Press), xiii-xvi.

⁶For an analysis of the how the Cherokee were impacted by linkage to this European trade network see Wilma A. Dunaway, "The Southern Fur Trade and the Incorporation of Southern Appalachia into the World Economy, 1690-1763," *Review* 17 (Fernand Braudel Center 1994): 215-242.

⁷Gary B Nash., *Red, White and Black: The Peoples of Early North America*, (Upper Saddle, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2000), 260-261.

perception of the place of women in the colonial period came out of the work of Frederick Jackson Turner and Elisabeth Anthony Dexter.

On July 12, 1893, at the meeting of the American Historical Association in Chicago the young professor Turner presented his paper “The Significance of the Frontier in American History” in which he argued that the frontier experience was an essential factor in the American experience that both defined the character of the nation and shaped its distinctiveness. A primary motivation for the research that led to his argument was provoked by the remarks of the Superintendent of the Census for 1890 who said:

Up to and including 1880 the country had a frontier of settlement, but at present the unsettled area has been so broken into by isolated bodies of settlement that there can hardly be said to be a frontier line. In the discussion of its extent, its westward movement, etc., it can not, therefore, any longer have a place in the census reports.⁸

In contrast to the frontier as a separating line between settled from unsettled areas Turner saw it as a moving line of advance and “the outer edge of the wave—the meeting point between savagery and civilization.”⁹ He admonished those scholars who focused too much on the “germ theory” then emanating from the Department of History at the Johns Hopkins University and emphasized instead the American factors, that is those factors that were in great measure the product of colonial struggles to master the wilderness.¹⁰ He argued that an analysis of the

⁸Frederick Jackson Turner, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History,” in *The Turner Thesis: Concerning the Role of the Frontier in American History*, revised edition with an introduction by George Rogers Taylor. (Boston: D.C. Heath and Company, 1956) 1.

⁹Turner, “Significance of the Frontier,” 2.

¹⁰Turner did his PhD at the Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore where Herbert Baxter Adams promoted the “germ theory” that explained historical development in terms of “germs” or antecedents that in particular stressed Anglo-Saxon linkages to American political and legal institutions. See Martin Ridge’s introduction to *History, Frontier and Section: Three Essays* by Frederick Jackson Turner (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1993), 6, <http://www.netlibrary.com/Reader/>, accessed May 28, 2005.

recurring patterns of political and social development in frontier environments demonstrated a declining European influence and a subsequent formation of a distinctly American culture that emphasized democracy and equality. According to Turner's argument the advances into new territory brought a continual return to primitive conditions where struggles for survival and demands for adaptation produced the distinctive American way of life. In the case of upper East Tennessee, which was still very new territory at the close of the eighteenth century, the geographical isolation, according to Turner, further increased its peculiarly American tendencies.¹¹

Turner's "frontier thesis" served for nearly a century as the crux of American historiography. Although most of his assumptions have been challenged, and many rejected, so that they no longer serve as the basis of serious historical inquiry, certain concepts of his "frontier thesis" have continued to influence historical thinking and his interest in the social process of settlement and development have continued to be shared by historians.¹² The distinctiveness of American character formed in the frontier environment at some point, and in some way, gave rise to the notion that women enjoyed greater freedom as part of the expanded climate of democracy and egalitarianism. In reality Turner's discussions about the frontier did not include women, just as it did not include minority and ethnic groups. The great debate about the American frontier was essentially "carried on by men and about men."¹³

Parallel to Turner's frontier thesis, perhaps even evolving from it, was the work of Elizabeth Anthony Dexter and other researchers of the 1920s and 1930s who contended that because women were scarce and essential in the colonies, previously rigid gender-ordered roles

¹¹Turner, "Significance of the Frontier," 3.

¹²Nobles, "Breaking into the Backcountry," 642.

¹³Gregory Nobles, "Frederick Jackson Turner: Deposed King of the Wild Frontier," *Hayes Historical Journal* 12 (1991-1993): 16.

could not be maintained. In her book, *Colonial Women of Affairs: Women in Business and the Professions in America Before 1776*, first published in 1924, Dexter set out to discover what kind of work colonial women were involved in and how society accepted the inevitable evidences of independence and initiative demonstrated by women's involvement in business and work outside the home. She found that in many cases women had a great deal of freedom to pursue business interests and earn income as tavern and/or inn keepers, midwives, teachers, dressmakers, and providers of other luxury services as the eastern seaboard cities especially became more affluent. "Handicaps, according to the present notions, may well have existed; but the evidence here presented indicates that they did not interfere with women's activity in a large variety of undertakings."¹⁴ Dexter found colonial women in New England functioning "apparently in a legal and social atmosphere of almost entire freedom," and in her conclusion she spoke to the current debates about women's rights with the question, "Is it possible that conditions were worse [in the nineteenth century] then than they had been in the previous century?"¹⁵ In response to her own question she reiterates the fact that because the productive and reproductive contributions of women were so crucial to survival in the colonial period their work was highly valued and they had "few legal or social constraints if they sought employment outside the home."¹⁶ Although late-twentieth century historians such as Mary Beth Norton have tended to overstate Dexter's conclusions, the "golden age" theory that evolved from it portrayed colonial women living side by side, almost as equals, with men until nineteenth-century industrialization ushered in a period of serious decline in the status of women. Even those scholars such as Gerda Lerner and Joan Hoff-

¹⁴Elisabeth Anthony Dexter, *Colonial Women of Affairs: Women in Business and the Professions in America Before 1776*, Second Edition Revised, (Clifton, New Jersey: Augustus M. Kelley Publishers, 1972), 189.

¹⁵Dexter, *Colonial Women*, 185.

¹⁶*ibid.*, 189.

Wilson who have denounced the idea of a “golden age” nevertheless argued that women in the American colonies had more opportunity and freedom than their European counterparts and that in the nineteenth century women suffered a loss of status and authentic function.¹⁷

Together these two theories produced a powerful construct that influenced the scholarship within women’s history from the late 1960s until the early 1980s when historians such as Mary Beth Norton, Lois Green, Marylynn Salmon, Carole Shammas, and Laurel Thatcher Ulrich exposed it as overly simplistic at the least and inaccurate in many respects. Their growing body of scholarship continues to examine both the premise that women enjoyed greater status in the late colonial period and the extent to which they were involved in developing economic networks beyond their household roles. Norton, in her article “The Evolution of White Women’s Experience in Early America” suggests that the “entire question of women’s status in the colonial period needs to be rethought” and that “definitions of gender roles, the nature of the colonial economy, demographic patterns, religion, the law, household organization, ideas and behavior brought from the Old World (especially England) and the colonists’ attitudes toward themselves and their society all contributed to defining the circumstances of women’s lives.”¹⁸ She further suggests that a three-part chronological division parallels the development of colonial women’s experiences. The initial period of settlement, from 1620 to approximately 1660, which is the approximate lifespan of the original migrant generation, witnessed the establishment of American patterns of family and community. That initial period was followed by almost a century of transition that reinforced, challenged, and in time reshaped those patterns. And finally the American Revolution and the beginning of the new republic brought changes and new challenges

¹⁷See Mary Beth Norton, “The Evolution of White Women’s Experience in Early America,” *The American Historical Review*, 89 (June 1984): 593-595; and Joan Hoff-Wilson, review of Norton’s *Liberty’s Daughters* and Linda K. Kerber’s *Women of the Republic* in *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 7 (Summer 1982): 882.

¹⁸Norton, “White Women’s Experience,” 595-596.

to women and “altered the definition of their role in society.”¹⁹ The question of altered roles in society is part of the problem this thesis addresses as it seeks, in an analysis of the records, to understand what defines a woman’s role and whether or not that role is an identification of her activities or a reflection of society’s attitudes about the place and function of women.

To answer questions about the nature of women’s lives in Tennessee’s frontier environment it is also necessary to consider the nature of women’s lives in general in eighteenth-century British North America. In recent years most scholarship has been based on research of New England, the Chesapeake area, and the Carolinas.²⁰ It has explored the lives of women with respect to marriage, household government, the criminal record, local economies, and society at large using both personal writings and public records. Based on research in these same areas, some very recent scholarship by Kate Fawver, Mary Beth Sievens, Ellen Hartigan-O’Connor, and Marla R. Miller investigates in particular the ways in which women moved into and out of household and market economies.²¹ In the Southern Appalachians, Mary K. Anglin, and Barbara Ellen Smith have addressed similar topics but deal with the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Wilma Dunaway’s work deals primarily with economic issues and is helpful for providing context but does not focus on white women’s connections to market systems. Lucy Gump’s master’s

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰In addition to Norton’s “White Women’s Experience” see Carol Shammas, “Household Government in Comparative Perspective, *William and Mary Quarterly* 52(January, 1995):104-144 and Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *Good Wives: Image and Reality in the Lives of Women in Northern New England 1650-1750* (New York: Vintage Books, 1991).

²¹See Kate Fawver, “Women’s Economies in the Chesapeake: The Organization of Labor in a Plantation Society; Ellen Hartigan-O’Connor, “She Said She Did Not Know Money”: Urban Woman and Atlantic Markets; Marla R. Miller, “The Last Mantuamaker: Craft Tradition and Commercial Change in Boston, 1760-1840; and Mary Beth Sievens, “To Assist Me in the Support of My Family: New England Woman, Markets, and the Household Economy, 1730-1830. This group of papers was presented at the Program for Early American Economy and Society, October 1, 2004, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

thesis provides a wealth of information about the material life of the period but again does not focus on women. As yet, there is no body of work for upper East Tennessee about the place of women in the early frontier period.²²

In spite of some differences in environment, culture, and religion, women of the late eighteenth-century Tennessee frontier shared many commonalities with women of the first migrant generation in New England and the Chesapeake region. In both cases some activities carried gender labels and some did not. Men held public office and directed the flow of economic development, while women bore and suckled children while directing domestic agendas. Both men and women participated in religious worship and experienced Indian warfare. Written records by and about women are scarce. According to Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, in New England neither men nor women wrote poetry and “the archives contain no female diaries written in New England before 1750 and few female letters.” She used “sermons, account books, probate inventories, genealogies, church records, court records, paintings, embroideries, gravestones, and the private papers of husbands and sons” to discover the world of women.²³

In the case of the upper East Tennessee frontier few men and apparently no women wrote in any significant way. Based on the available records consulted one would conclude that no diaries, prayer journals, or personal journals written by women have survived if, indeed, they ever

²²Lucy Gump, “Possessions and Pattens of Living in Washington County: The 20 Years Before Tennessee Statehood, 1777-1796,” (Master’s thesis, East Tennessee State University, 1989) See also Mary K. Anglin, “Lives on the Margin: Rediscovering the Women of Antebellum Western North Carolina,” in *Appalachia in the Making: The Mountain South in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Mary Beth Pudur, Dwight B. Billings and Altina L. Waller, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 185-209; Wilma A. Dunaway, *The First American Frontier: Transition to Capitalism in Southern Appalachia, 1700-1860* (Chapel Hill : University of North Carolina Press, 1996); and Barbara Ellen Smith, “‘Beyond the Mountains’: The Paradox of Women’s Place in Appalachian History,” *NWSA Journal* 11.3 (1999) 1-17.
http://muse.jhu.edu.ezproxy.etsu.edu:2048/journals/nwsa_journal/v011/11.3smith.html accessed 4/14/2005.

²³Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *Good Wives: Image and Reality in the Lives of Women in Northern New England 1650-1750* (New York: Vintage Books, 1991), 5.

existed. The Revolution began within a decade of these first settlements and many of the official records for the area prior to 1780 have been lost. An examination of the remaining available court records, wills, and probate inventories can be helpful in recovering details and discovering attitudes about the lives of women in this frontier period. This thesis examines a group of Washington County wills found in the Lucy Gump research papers in the Archives of Appalachia, written between 1773 and 1796, as well as the relatively small number of cases involving women who made use of the courts, or were defendants before the courts in the records of the Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions and the Superior Court for Washington County. Also included are cases from Carter County found in the archival records of the Watauga Historical Association. Examining court records for this early period is problematical because the records are archived in different locations and portions of them have been lost or destroyed. The land grant records of Washington County are in Raleigh, North Carolina in the Secretary of State's Land Grant Office and the minutes for the Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions, usually referred to as the County Court, and the Superior Court records are in the Tennessee State Library and Archives in Nashville. Microfilm copies of these records are available through the Sherrod Library at East Tennessee State University. Additional court documents are in the Paul Fink Collection in the Calvin M. McClung Collection at the East Tennessee History Center in Knoxville and the Fink and Dulaney Papers in the Special Collections Library of the University of Tennessee, also in Knoxville,. Officially sanctioned handwritten transcriptions of court minutes through 1798 are found in the Washington County Courthouse in Jonesborough and two collections, containing court dockets and minutes of civil and criminal cases, are in the Archives of Appalachia at East Tennessee State University in Johnson City. An additional area of confusion arises from the fact that upper East Tennessee was governed successively by North Carolina (1777-1784), the State of Franklin (1784-1789), North Carolina (1789-1791), the Territory of the United States South of

the River Ohio (1791-1794), and Tennessee (1794).²⁴ Lacking chroniclers or newspapers, the County Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions records yield insight into how the community viewed the responsibilities of citizenship. According to John Allison, these records also enlighten us about the men who held power in the courts and “their notions concerning the business and social relations of life, and indeed, on all matters which, in their judgment, pertained in any way to the peace, good fame, and welfare of the community and of individuals.”²⁵

This thesis examined court records found in the Watauga Historical Association Collection and the Washington County Court Records found in the Archives of Appalachia, the microfilm records of Washington County Court records in the Sherrod Library, the officially transcribed minute books in the Washington County Courthouse in Jonesborough, and records of the Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions from 1777-1779 published in two issues of the *American Historical Magazine* from 1900 and 1901 respectively. In addition, one published store account book from Cheek’s Crossroads, a daybook kept by David Deaderick in Jonesborough from 1800 to 1801, early newspapers of Knoxville, and Lucy Gump’s master’s thesis dealing with the material culture of the region served as a lens to look at the material life of upper East Tennessee.²⁶ The group of wills used for this thesis are found in Lucy Gump’s Thesis Research Papers in the Archives of Appalachia. Although there is one will written by a woman and several by widowers only those of husbands were used in the analysis. The available evidence is thin gruel but nevertheless provides clues to evaluate early upper East Tennessee society and compare

²⁴The Watauga Association, 1772-1777, a period of local self-government, preceded the first jurisdiction of North Carolina in 1777.

²⁵ John Allison, *Dropped Stitches in Tennessee History* printed in “The Records of Washington County,” *The American Historical Magazine* V (1900), 327.

²⁶Ann K. Blomquist, ed., *Cheek’s Cross Roads Tennessee, Store Journal, 1802-1807* (Baltimore: Gateway Press, 2001); David Deaderick, “Daybook 1800-1801, Fink and Dulaney Collection, MS2018, Special Collections Library of the University of Tennessee, Knoxville; Gump, “Possessions and Pattens.”

its patterns to those of other colonial areas at a comparable time period. The heart of this work is the analysis of primary documents, especially the group of wills and selected court records, which provides evidence that although the activities of women, especially in the earliest years, were altered by extenuating circumstances, the attitudes about women and their place in society changed little. As life in the area moved away from survival mode to a more stable, customary existence, traditional patriarchal marriage and family structures and gender roles resumed. Although upper East Tennessee developed into a multifaceted, multilayered region that was, in the words of David Hsiung, “both isolated and integrated,” underlying attitudes about the place of women did not significantly change. They did not change because they were solidly embedded in the patriarchal construct that formed the basis of the culture the settlers left behind, and the culture they brought with them.

CHAPTER 3

WORK ALWAYS, WORSHIP OFTEN, DANCE WHEN YOU CAN

*We had a good dinner, and in the evening a great dance...which I suppose the great emigration from Skye has occasioned. They call it "America"'*¹

In upper East Tennessee, settler communities developed social, economic, political, and cultural lifeways that were more similar to than different from those of other British American colonial areas. Passing through similar stages of development but compressed into a shorter time frame, the area moved from initial settlement to mature, democratic society in less than half a century. What can be said of the community in general can be said about the lives of women in this time and place. Their lives were difficult, filled with unending work, environmental hardships, and the ongoing threat of violence from Indian attacks. From the first days of initial settlement in 1770, through the early years of the nineteenth century, women worked side by side with men in the family to clear land, plant crops, and manage their unending domestic duties. Because we have no particular studies that outline women's daily duties, we look to the general descriptions of material life in several older histories of Tennessee, to the confirmation found in probate inventories that provide information about the crops, tools, and equipment common to the area during this time (1770-1810), to the information gleaned by historians looking at pioneer communities in other areas such as New England, and to the situations described for yeoman farm families in the South who share similar demographic patterns, although in a later period, to gain some insight into how women worked, worshiped, socialized, and in general managed their lives.

William Bean, credited by most historians as the first permanent white settler of Tennessee, arrived alone from his home in Pittsylvania County, Virginia, and began clearing land

¹James Boswell, *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides with Samuel Johnson, LL.D.*, (1795, New York, 1936), 242 (2 October 1773) in David Hackett Fischer, *Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 608.

on Boone's Creek near its confluence with the Watauga River in the fall of 1768. Sometime in early 1769 he built a cabin on the side of a ridge a hundred yards up Boone's Creek at a spot previously used by Daniel Boone for a hunting camp. The ridge hid the cabin from canoes passing along the Watauga River and a fall at the immediate mouth of the creek kept canoes from turning out of the river into the creek. Family tradition says the security of the location and an abundance of game influenced Bean's site selection.²

In 1769, Bean fetched his wife, their sons William and John, and his wife's brothers George and John Russell. Soon other relatives and old neighbors joined the groups settling along the Watauga River. At very close to the same time, if not before, families arrived and settled on the North Fork of the Holston. These families were the first of a steady stream that arrived to clear land and build futures.³ Within a few years cabins and farm plots appeared along the Watauga, Holston, and Nolichucky Rivers and the numerous creeks that fed them.

Although the Cherokee had long since moved their towns further south along the Little Tennessee River, they continued to hunt the rivers of upper East Tennessee. In the first years of settlement, even after women and children moved in, relations with them were tenuous and attacks occurred without warning. In spite of the dangers the population continued to explode with settler families in a colonization pattern that was distinct from those of the original colonies. In the case of New England, family groups came as congregations with ministers and established leadership. In Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, and the Carolinas the strong influence of British

²Samuel Cole Williams, *Dawn of Tennessee Valley and Tennessee History* (Johnson City, Tennessee: The Watauga Press, 1937), 337-341; see also Finger, *Tennessee Frontiers*, 42-45.

³Williams, *Dawn of Tennessee*, 339-353 and *passim*. One John Ryan established a land claim on the Nolichucky River in 1768 but did not remain. His claim was purchased by Jacob Brown in 1771. Some evidence also suggests a settlement prior to 1770 near the Sapling Grove area, present day Bristol, Tennessee, on land patented by Colonel James Patton in 1753. Evan Shelby acquired the claim in 1773.

proprietors created the structure on which colonial patterns grew.⁴ In upper East Tennessee, however, individuals, single family units, and in some cases groups of families, arrived, settled, and built wherever they could find land and make some sort of arrangement with local groups of Cherokee. Isolated frontier settlements grew without the benefit of prescribed plans from a central authority or the leadership of established churches. Scots-Irish Presbyterians, Germans and Dutch from Pennsylvania, Huguenots from French settlements on the Ohio and Mississippi rivers, Swedes from Delaware, and Englishmen from Virginia and the Carolinas came to forge new communities “bound together by the necessity of defense and the convenience of economic relations.”⁵

Although colonial governments maintained social and judicial control east of the Appalachians, they were ill equipped to deal with the frontier communities of the new Southwest. According to Eric Hinderaker and Peter Mancall, in the decade preceding the War for Independence the trans-Appalachian backcountry was a realm beyond the practical control of colonial governments and a place where English governance and behavioral norms did not prevail.⁶

Not only the Proclamation of 1763, but also several treaties between the British and the Cherokee meant that the settlers in upper East Tennessee could not purchase land from the

⁴Norton, *Founding Mothers*, 13; James A. Roark, et al, *The American Promise: A History of the United States, volume I to 1877*, Second Edition, (New York: Bedford St. Martin's, 2002), 62,88-95.

⁵Albert C. Holt, “The Economic and Social Beginnings of Tennessee, *Tennessee Historical Magazine*, 7 (October 1921), 256; see also, Eric Hinderaker and Peter C. Mancall, *At the Edge of Empire: The Backcountry in British North America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 172; Finger, *Tennessee Frontiers*, 166-169; and Gump, “Possessions and Patterns,” 51.

⁶Hinderaker and Mancall, *At the Edge of Empire*, 4. Hinderaker and Mancall also point out that although the scale of this internal migration was small compared to westward movement in the nineteenth century, it nevertheless established westward migration as a strategy for family improvement and accelerated the collapse of British authority in North America, 151.

Cherokee and had to leave their homes in Carter's Valley, the Sycamore Shoals community, and the settlement on the Nolichucky. Gathering in Sycamore Shoals to consider their options, Jacob Brown, John Carter, and the Watauga men decided "they would abide by the letter of the Proclamation and to hell with its spirit. Prohibited from buying property beyond the Proclamation line, they would lease their lands from the Cherokees."⁷ At about the same time, having secured their lands but remaining in doubt about which colonial government would provide leadership and protection, these first families set up a system of government. They may have been beyond the practical and direct control of either Virginia or North Carolina and some behavioral norms may have been adapted to the frontier environment, but they recognized the need for security and order within the community. In May of 1772 the Written Articles of Association established a five-member court and additional local offices including those of sheriff and clerk to handle land claims, legalize marriages, probate wills, punish criminals, and oversee a militia. It was an extralegal government, based on the laws of Virginia, that was intended to maintain order and keep "debtors, deadbeats, and the lawless" at bay.⁸

The determination of these first families to establish order among themselves while resisting the strong arm of British governance depicts a society far more civilized and in search of traditional lifeways than that described by several scribes who traveled among them. According to Gregory H. Nobles in his groundbreaking examination of the early American frontier, eighteenth-century established elites of the Atlantic seaboard considered backcountry settlers to be completely uncivilized. Making little, if any, distinction between white yeomen and Indians, William Byrd II described them in his 1728 travel journal as "'indolent wretches' who lived 'just like the lazy Indians.'" In 1788, Francis Asbury wrote of spending a night in "a little dirty house

⁷Finger, *Tennessee Frontiers*, 45.

⁸*Ibid.*, 45-47 (Finger)

where the filth might be taken up from the floor with a spade” and the Reverend Samuel Frink, called backcountry Georgians “the Refuse of Virginia North Carolina Maryland &c.”⁹ Such descriptions are an interesting counterpoint to romantic views of frontiersmen as fearless, larger-than-life heroes and heroines. In reality, the majority of the newcomers were of the “middling sort” and many were second or third generation immigrants from Europe seeking greater economic opportunity through acquisition of sufficient fertile land. Nearly three-fourths of those who arrived and settled in upper East Tennessee in the first decade arrived by way of the Great Valley of Virginia and most of the rest crossed the mountains from North Carolina. Believing that land ownership led to personal independence and fueled by a frontier tradition of squatters’ rights they expected to establish their farms by simply occupying and working them. The majority were yeoman farmers who worked with purpose to supply their households and maintain their independence.¹⁰

They came to East Tennessee on horseback driving herds of cows, pigs, and horses. Though they continued to hunt, over time they came to depend on domestic livestock to provide a constant supply of meat and dairy products. They cleared land and built homes of log and stone, felled trees, and planted grain crops. Corn and flax, the two most common crops could be planted amid the stumps of newly cleared land without the need to plow and required little care except to keep crows, squirrels, and other wildlife away.¹¹ Corn was the food grain of choice because it

⁹Nobles, “Breaking into the Backcountry,” 644 and Samuel Cole Williams, *Early Travels in the Tennessee Country, 1500-1800*, (Johnson City, Tennessee: The Watauga Press, 1928), 291.

¹⁰Finger, *Tennessee Frontiers*, 162; Nobles, “Breaking into the Backcountry,” 648-655; and Kenneth W. Keller, “What is Distinctive About the Scotch-Irish?” in *Appalachian Frontiers: Settlement, Society, & Development in the Preindustrial Era*, ed. R. D. Mitchell, (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1991), 69-72.

¹¹In addition to the pioneer housewife’s daily duties was the responsibility of chasing away squirrels, crows, and at times wolves. As late as 1797 damage to crops from these pests was so great that the second General Assembly of the State of Tennessee authorized the counties to levy a poll tax to be paid in squirrels’ or crows’ scalps. Holt, “The Economic and Social Beginnings of Tennessee,” 274.

flourished in a wide variety of soils and climates, it was easier to harvest than wheat or barley, and its yield—the proportion of bushels harvested to bushels planted— was much higher.¹² Families ate corn roasted, boiled, fried, and ground into meal for cornbread. They added it to soups and stews and soaked it in wood lye water to make hominy and hominy grits. Corn served as fodder for livestock after the abundant canebrakes were grazed out, and the cobs became pipe bowls, fire starters, and “toilet paper.” Corn became the grain of choice for whiskey making. Tennessee and Kentucky bourbon, distilled from corn and rye, replaced the traditional Scotch whiskey distilled from barley. Frontier families in upper East Tennessee also distilled apples, peaches, and rye. According to some sources, whiskey was widely used by men, women, and children not only for medicinal purposes but as a common table drink. Young children consumed it with a little sugar added to make it more palatable. The Marquis de Chastelleux, on a trip through the Virginia backcountry in 1782, noted in his journal that “‘Wheyski’ was our only drink, as it was on the three days following.”¹³ In Washington County the public sale of whiskey was regulated by the courts which licensed “ordinarys” and set the rates they could charge for lodging, for various alcoholic drinks, and for “stabledge” and “pasturage.” Both written wills and probate inventories list stills and their appurtenances indicating that private production and consumption of liquor was common.¹⁴ It is not clear to what extent whiskey served as a family table drink in Washington County in the eighteenth century. Yeoman farmers in upper East Tennessee raised cattle from the earliest years of settlement and the equipment for dairy production shows up in public records.

¹²Hinderaker and Mancall, *At the Edge of Empire*, 165; and Finger, *Tennessee Frontiers*, 53-55.

¹³David Hackett Fischer, *Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in America*, (New York: Oxford Press, 1989): 729. See also Finger, *Tennessee Frontiers*, 181.

¹⁴“The Records of Washington County” published records of Washington County Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions in *The American Historical Magazine*, V (1900): 363.

Although children may or may not have consumed cows' or goats' milk, milk and milk clabber were part of the diet of the Scotch-Irish immigrants.¹⁵ The overall level of alcohol consumption in the eighteenth century was high enough that some social scientists have referred to the early United States as the "alcoholic republic" but how alcohol consumption may have affected the lives of women is difficult to assess. Most sources of frontier history and culture mention high levels of alcohol consumption and widespread violence. The extant court records for Washington County, however, do not record many violent crimes traceable to alcohol and do indicate that the courts expected citizens to abide by the law and show respect for the courts and its officers.¹⁶

For frontier farmers, the factors of production and reproduction remained within the household, in a private sphere, an arrangement that had the effect of reinforcing the power of men in society.¹⁷ The process of becoming a landowner, establishing a household, and maintaining independence was long and difficult even where land was readily available. In time, if a man was fortunate, his children would grow and become laborers for the family. The purchase of even a few slaves could multiply his opportunities for advancement and slaves were part of frontier life in upper East Tennessee from the beginning. However the majority of households consisted of family members and consequently the more children a man had and the older they were, the greater the amount of land

¹⁵"John Lipscomb's Journal" in Samuel Cole Williams, *Early Travels in the Tennessee Country*, (Johnson City, Tennessee: The Watauga Press, 1928), 27.

¹⁶Fischer, *Albion's Seed*, 675-677, 765-771; and "The Records of Washington County," 327-330.

¹⁷The term *household*, used by historians as well as anthropologists and sociologists, designates a basic social unit in which people voluntarily, or involuntarily, pool income and resources. See Frank L. Owsley, "Plain Folk and Their Role in Southern History", in *The South: Old and New Frontiers*, 33; and Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household*. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 38-39.

he cultivated.”¹⁸

Early upper East Tennessee wives and daughters were concerned with food production and were likely to oversee a large garden, the barnyard, and the smokehouse. Most of what the family ate was grown, raised, preserved, and cooked by women. They milked the cows, churned the butter, and made the cheese. Most of what the family wore was spun, woven, dyed, and sewed by women. They tended the sheep, which were not uncommon in Washington County and raised primarily for their wool, and harvested the flax used to weave linen. Estate inventories from the 1770s onward show that spinning wheels and looms were common and linen became a backcountry staple used by families and sold in the emerging market economy.¹⁹

In addition to their involvement with gardens, barnyards and smokehouses, women and girls worked in the fields when it was necessary. On his journeys through the South in the mid-nineteenth century, Frederick Law Olmsted insisted that “he had seen more white native American women at work in the hottest sunshine in a single month, and that near mid-summer, than in all my life in the free states. . . . Not on account of an emergency, as in harvesting, either, but in the regular cultivation of cotton and of corn [but] chiefly of cotton.”²⁰ His observation was correct and acknowledged to be true in private while in public the issue was not discussed. This labor practice, more than any other, set yeoman wives and daughters apart not only from women of

¹⁸Even among yeomen slaveholders, the same pattern emerged. The wealthiest farmers cultivated the most acreage and had the most and oldest children. Slaveholder or nonslaveholder, they were bound by the “land and labor logic of the family farms. The difference, then, was one of degree, not kind.” Stephanie McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds*, 59-60.

¹⁹See Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household*, 166; Stephanie McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds: Yeoman Households, Gender Relations, and the Political Culture of the Antebellum South Carolina Low Country* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 75; Ann Cameron MacRae, “Women at the Loom: Handweaving in Washington County, Tennessee, 1840-1860,” (Master’s thesis, East Tennessee State University, 2001).

²⁰Frederick Law Olmsted, *A Journey in the Back Country*, (Williamstown, Mass.: Corner House 1972), 298.

wealthier, slave-holding households, but from women of similar circumstances in New England or the Delaware Valley. David Hackett Fischer in *Albion's Seed*, elaborates on this theme and explains that backcountry women routinely engaged in all forms of heavy manual labor alongside their husbands: "Travelers were startled to observe delicate females knock down beef cattle with a felling ax, and then roll down their sleeves, remove their bloody aprons, tidy their hair, and invite their visitors to tea."²¹ Fischer explains that traditional division of labor along gender lines observed in other parts of the British colonies did not prevail in the backcountry. Frontier conditions in Puritan New England, for example, did not produce the same level of female involvement in heavy manual labor. The labor patterns observed in the Southern highlands replicated patterns observed in North Britain areas such as Westmorland and Cumberland where a traveler in 1766 observed an entire family, father, mother, sons, and daughters all working together in the fields.²² Elizabeth Fox-Genovese in examining labor patterns in slave-holding areas of the South found that in recognition of a yeoman wife's heavy work load, the first slave a man purchased would serve his wife, not to replace her labor, but to supplement it. Even in slave-holding situations, women, though less involved in manual labor still had responsibility for managing the household.²³

Daily life for both men and women revolved around the household and farmers rarely left their farms for extended visits. They did, however, cooperate in labor activities and used them as social occasions. House raisings, log rollings, and corn shuckings were common in all frontier communities and community participation in building houses in particular was a rural folkway

²¹Fischer, *Albion's Seed*, 676.

²²Fischer, *Albion's Seed*, 676.

²³Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household*, 115.

practiced in many parts of the South as late as World War I.²⁴ The houses so constructed were simple to be sure and although to outsiders such as Olmsted they appeared to be little more than “pens of logs roofed over,” they served the specific needs of backcountry families. Cabins were the first step, the temporary housing that was, nevertheless built to endure. Often the original cabin became an outbuilding when the family later constructed a frame house. Olmsted and other outsiders failed to understand the way yeoman households worked. Kitchens were often separate buildings because heat and fire danger required it. Spinning wheels, looms, and materials for sewing and weaving occupied space in yeoman houses because they were centers of productive labor. The refinements, so prized by Olmsted and others, were neither possible, nor important, because the primary goal was sustaining an independent household.²⁵

The responsibilities of children and household chores kept women more often at home while men went to market, to political meetings, to militia drills, and musters. The day book records for both David Deaderick’s store in Jonesborough and another at Cheek’s Crossroads in the first years of the nineteenth century show that men did most of the trading. On those occasions when a wife came in to trade, the account book entries were entered and kept under her husband’s name. Only a handful of women’s names were recorded and those were usually widows or wives whose husbands are away. In his book, *Tennessee Frontiers*, John R. Finger mentions an East Tennessee account book for 1800-1801, undoubtedly that of David Deaderick, and points

²⁴Frank Lawrence Owsley, *Plain Folk of the Old South*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1949), 104.

²⁵Frederick Law Olmsted, *A Journey in the Back Country*, in McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds*, 73. For more on cabins and houses see John Alexander Williams, *Appalachia: A History*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 96, 105-108; and Gump, “Possessions and Patterns,” 59-69.

out that out of 347 customers recorded only 29 women and blacks are listed.²⁶ Even when a woman was involved in the wider community as a midwife or healer she was still rooted in her own household. The diary kept by Martha Ballard, a midwife in the frontier region of Maine, shows that in the 123 days from January 1st to May 3rd of 1785 she attended nine deliveries and made a number of house calls and social visits but nevertheless spent almost eighty percent of her time in her own home, working steadily to maintain her own household.²⁷

On those occasions when women and their families gathered for labor-sharing activities or purely social celebrations singing, music making on various instruments, dancing, and games played an integral part. Lubricated by free-flowing whiskey or not, people of all ages participated in dances of various ethnic origins. Although some religious leaders spoke against mixed dancing, country dancing enjoyed great popularity among all social groups on both sides of the Atlantic from the seventeenth through the early nineteenth century. Backcountry men and women enjoyed reels, sets, and jigs in taverns and barns whenever time and opportunity permitted.²⁸

As significant as the productive labor of women might have been, their role in reproduction was essential. Most women accepted the common view that reproduction was part of a woman's religious and cultural duty, and in the early years of the new republic, a patriotic obligation. Women knew what was expected of them as bearers of heirs. They did not always welcome the prospect because pregnancy and childbirth were painful and dangerous processes. Sally McMillen's research on pregnancy, childbirth, and motherhood in the old South in the first

²⁶Finger, *Tennessee Frontiers*, 165.

²⁷*Martha Ballard's Diary*, January 1 to May 3, 1785, online at www.doHistory.org. Transcription courtesy of Robert and Cynthia McCausland. Accessed on June, 13, 2005.

²⁸John Ogasapian, *Music of the Colonial and Revolutionary Era*, American History through Music, David J. Brinkman, Series Editor, (London: Greenwood Press, 2004), 102-104.

half of the nineteenth century shows that the mortality rate for infants and parturient mothers was high and higher in the South than in the North. In the Southern highlands where milder winters had less effect in killing disease carrying organisms, dysentery, a host of febrile diseases, and intestinal parasites abounded. Although Upper East Tennessee has a more moderate climate with colder winters than the deep south, febrile diseases and intestinal parasites were common. The additional strain of pregnancy and childbirth put women at greater risk and southern women bore more children than women living in the Northeast which means they put their lives at risk more often.²⁹

It is plausible to assume that in the frontier of upper East Tennessee, as in the antebellum South, wives gave birth in their homes and rarely used doctors due to expense, distance, or both. Instead, they relied on female relatives or midwives who continued to use traditional, natural methods. For white women in the early frontier period the prospects of a long and painful delivery hung as a specter in the home and maternal death during childbirth remained an ongoing fear. Families also shared the common experience of grieving for the loss of a child. Motherhood was a primary function of southern women and mothering an intrinsic part of her existence. Consequently, the frequent trial of burying dead children was a source of great pain. Even when husbands were supportive and tried to be a source of strength to grieving wives, women often turned for comfort to other women who had experienced similar losses.³⁰

Since most of the immigrant groups who arrived and settled the upper East Tennessee region were of British, or at least Western European, extraction and ascribed to Protestant

²⁹ See Sally G. McMillen, *Motherhood in the Old South: Pregnancy, Childbirth, and Infant Rearing* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990), 81; and Norton, "Evolution of White Women's Experience," 614.

³⁰ McMillen, *Motherhood in the Old South*, 175.

denominations whose doctrines stressed personal accountability to God, it is reasonable to assume that men and women turned to God in times of trouble, as well as in times of joy. Although the impact of religion in the lives of people can be difficult to determine, the ethical values of Protestant Christianity were reflected in the frontier community. The Presbyterians, were present from the earliest years followed by Quakers, Baptists, Methodists, and other Protestant groups. Religious diversity in upper East Tennessee meant a variety of Protestant denominations as, according to John Finger, there was apparently only one Roman Catholic citizen who settled in Knoxville and no records indicating the presence of Jewish or other non-Christian groups.³¹ Two general trends impacted society in the latter part of the colonial period, an increasingly secular and worldly lifestyle and a shift within dissenting groups to an even greater focus on a personal relationship with God emotionally expressed. According to Christine Heyrman less than twenty percent of the adult white population claimed membership in Baptist, Methodist, or Presbyterian churches by the 1810s, although more people attended than were members.³² In church services, congregational singing of hymns became increasingly important and spilled over into the household environment as well. The Bible was the book most often purchased by Americans at the end of the eighteenth century, followed by hymn books.³³ Stephen Marini's analysis of seventy-one evangelical hymns popular in the eighteenth century indicates a

³¹Discussion of religion in this context does not include the fact that Native Americans, African slaves, and free Blacks had religious beliefs and undoubtedly drew on them to manage their daily lives. Many of them did, at least outwardly, become part of the Christian community but to what extent that ordered their household dynamics is not considered here. See Finger, *Tennessee Frontiers*, 171 and Lou F. McNeil, "Catholic Mission and Evangelization," *Christianity in Appalachia: Profiles in Pluralism*, ed. Bill J. Leonard, (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1999), 264.

³² Christine Leigh Heyrman, *Southern Cross: The Beginnings of the Bible Belt*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 5-6.

³³The Cheek's Crossroads Account book for 1802-1807 list purchases for Bibles and a *Baltimore Hymn Book* which was apparently *The Baltimore Collection of Church Music* by Alexander Fry, 1792.

marked absence of hymns about the church as an institution, worship, baptism, revival, or the doctrines of the Godhead, the Trinity, and the Last Judgement-- the most controversial themes among denominations. Instead his analysis reveals a preference for what he calls consensus hymns dealing with atonement, invitation, salvation, sanctification, witness, perseverance, death, and heaven that articulated the direct, transforming experience of late eighteenth century evangelical Christianity. These popular hymns express a belief structure that is "more mythic than systematic, more aligned with exhortation, meditation, and testimony than with doctrinal ratiocination."³⁴

By century's end, the precursors of the second great awakening were stirring with the advent of camp meetings. Francis Asbury's lament in 1797 that "not one in a hundred came here to get religion, but rather to get plenty of good land," was swallowed up in the wave of open-air revival meetings that sometimes lasted for days, crossed denominational lines, and were marked at times by extreme physical manifestations of ecstasy. Revivals continued to be a part of Tennessee backcountry religious life and probably softened the rough edges of its frontier culture.³⁵

Churches were the single most important cultural institution in the backcountry outside the household itself and the place where in principle women shared in spiritual equality. In church all people were equal in the sight of God. Equality before God designated a spiritual condition that did not obviate the literal interpretation of the Biblical pattern of family structure. Male authority and female submission were far more than patterns for marital and familial harmony. In upper East Tennessee, as in the rest of the southern backcountry, the construct of male dominance and

³⁴Stephen Marini, "Hymnody as History: Early Evangelical Hymns and the Recovery of American Popular Religion," *Church History* 71 (June 2002): 7 of 25.
<http://infotrac.galegroup.com.esproxy.etsu.edu:2048/itw/infomark/961/333/66234773w5/p>. Accessed 4/30/2005.

³⁵See John Anthony Caruso, *The Appalachian Frontier: America's First Surge Westward*, with a new introduction by John Inscoc, Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2003, 221-231; Everett Dick, "Religious Democracy," in *The Social Fabric: American Life from 1607 to 1877*, Volume I Seventh Edition, John H. Cary, et al, eds. New York: Harper Collins, 1995, 115-127; Finger, *Tennessee Frontiers*, 171-175; Fischer, *Albion's Seed*, 703-708; and "Journal of Bishop Francis Asbury," in Williams, *Early Travels in Tennessee Country*, 305.

complete authority over his household was considered essential in the difficult, if not hostile environment. Obedient, submissive, and respectful wives reinforced a perception of power that benefitted the community.³⁶

The household served as the core institution of frontier economy and society and generally consisted of married husbands and wives, their biological children, slaves and/or indentured servants, extended family members, and boarders. Patriarchal in form, it also constituted a primary unit of government for most of the people of the community, because women, children, servants, and slaves lived under the authority of the white male head of the household. These dependents had limited direct contact with official government be it colony, territory, county, or state. The household head assumed responsibility for directing the economic, educational, social, and religious activities of household members. In her study of Anglo-American household government, Carole Shammas found that the role of the household head likely expanded during the course of the colonial period due to the emancipating effect of land availability and religious diversity. She states that high land-to-labor ratios tended to raise the cost of public institutions that would mediate the power of masters of households and that religious diversity precluded church establishment of legal, educational, and welfare institutions of the sort common in European countries that have a strong church state nexus. Her argument regarding land-to-labor ratios is counter to the widely held view that land availability acts as a liberating force and a threat to the household master's control over dependents. She explains that unoccupied land is not necessarily available land and the increased demand for laborers led to slavery and indenture servitude. In upper East Tennessee, self-working yeoman farmers outnumbered slave holding farmers and indenture servitude was not widespread. There were no organized publicly supported educational or welfare systems and most economic and social problems were resolved within the

³⁶See Heyram's chapter, "Mothers and Others in Israel," in *Southern Cross*, 161-205 for a discussion on women and the evangelical experience.

household or local church community. Although yeoman farmers were the largest demographic group in early Upper East Tennessee, other families worked the land as tenant farmers, and some men as hired hands. Others chose to make their living in towns such as Jonesborough, Greeneville, or Knoxville, as shopkeepers, tavern owners, lawyers, preachers, schoolmasters, the always too few doctors, blacksmiths, and jacks-of-many-trades who moved in and out. Most women were wives or widows attached in some way to immediate or extended families. Some women managed a single existence within the bounds of propriety, others were caught in dangerous margins.³⁷

Fischer, in *Albion's Seed*, essentially concurs with Shammass and challenges the myth that frontier environments create a spirit of equality between the sexes. He again links the male-dominant backcountry culture to its origin in North Britain where the status of women did not improve legally or practically during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. According to Fischer, the culture of North Britain, and by extension that of upper East Tennessee was the product of generations that lived in conditions of ongoing insecurity and developed "an ethic that exalts war above work, force above reason, and men above women."³⁸

The evidence found in public documents will be examined in the next chapter to determine to what extent upper East Tennessee does, or does not reflect the patterns found in the literature for similar places in similar stages of frontier development.

³⁷Finger, *Tennessee Frontiers*, 53-54, 179-184. See also John Solomon Otto, "The Migration of the Southern Plain Folk: An Interdisciplinary Synthesis," *Journal of Southern History*, 51 (May 1985). Regarding disease and medical care see Caruso, *The Appalachian Frontier*, 219-221. Caruso, quoting Joseph Dodderidge who wrote about the frontier period in the western part of Virginia and Pennsylvania, says, "No one who bore the name of doctor lived within a considerable distance of the residence of my father."

³⁸Fischer, *Albion's Seed*, 680.

CHAPTER 4

“NOTHING DURING COVERTURE:” WIVES AND PROPERTY

“When a small brooke or little river incorporateth with . . . the Thames, the poor rivulet looseth her name; . . . it beareth no sway; it possesseth nothing during coverture. A woman as soon as she is married, is called covert; . . . that is ‘veiled’; as it were, clouded and overshadowed; she hath lost her streame. . . Her new self is her superior; her companion, her master. . . .¹

“John Bullard, deceased, did give and bequeath unto Mary Bullard his dear and well beloved wife all and every part of his...estate belonging of his goods and chattels. . . unto her sole use and disposal as she may think proper.”² Bullard’s nuncupative will, committed to writing on October 15, 1780, and that of Jacob Mitchell written a year earlier are remarkable because they left their entire estates to their wives with no restrictions.³ These two wills are part of a group of fifty-seven, written between 1773 and 1796, that form a basis for profiling the place of wives in early upper East Tennessee with respect to property. Lacking traditional sources such as letters and diaries, probate inventories, wills, and tax records can be analyzed to identify husbands’ attitudes about wives, children, and property.

Based on an analysis of these wills, several observed patterns will be considered. The first is their use of religious language and what that language may reveal about the relationship

¹From an English manual on *The Lawes Resolutions of women’s Rights, 1632*, quoted in Janet Wilson James, *Changing Ideas About Women in the United States, 1776-1825* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1981), 6.

²Nuncupative will of John Bullard found in the Lucy Gump Thesis Research Papers, 1773-1796, Inventories and Wills, part 1, 1773-1782, Box 1 Folder 1, Archives of Appalachia, East Tennessee State University. All of the wills examined and quoted in this paper are found in this collection.

³Ibid., Jacob Mitchells named “Mary Mitchells my wife sole heir of everything....and executor” in 1779.

between husbands and wives at that time. A second pattern concerns how men chose to dispose of their property with respect to the amount of property, or the portion of the estate, left to widows. What do these choices reveal of a man's attitudes about his wife, his progeny, and his responsibility to each of them? A third pattern examined is the use of caveats that make a widow's inheritance conditional on her widowhood. The fourth concerns the common use of *usufruct* language that essentially kept a woman from having control over property after her husband's death. The use of remarriage caveats and usufruct language are related and together raise questions about the perceived role and function of women in upper East Tennessee society at the close of the eighteenth century. The fifth observed pattern involves the choices men made regarding executorships of their estates. Executors, in a legal and practical way, acted on behalf of the deceased to carry out his wishes and were therefore an extension of his power. Did men entrust this power to women? If so, what, if anything, does it tell us about their views of gender and power?

The nuclear family, patriarchal in structure, formed the basis of society in the eighteenth century Tennessee frontier even as it did in New England, the Chesapeake region, and the Carolinas. An adult woman's marital state determined her status; as an adjunct to her husband, her social standing depended on his position in the social hierarchy and her legal status, especially with regard to property continued to be based on British models of *feme covert*, *usufruct*, and *primogeniture*.⁴ Washington County was part of North Carolina at the end of the colonial period, and North Carolina laws and customs "originated in English statute and common law, in equity

⁴ Mary Beth Norton, "The Evolution of White Women's Experience in Early America," *The American Historical Review*, 89 (June 1984): 600.

law, and to some extent in the legal practices of neighboring colonies, particularly Virginia.”⁵

The principle of *feme covert*, or coverture, constructed the paradigm that determined how married women were perceived by the courts and what recourse they had within the legal system. As the archaic language of the *Lawes Resolutions of Women's Rights* so elegantly and chillingly expresses, a woman once married was lost, her name and identity swallowed up by her “new self . . . her companion, her master.” Coverture meant that a wife could not make a will, or any type of contract, convey land, sue or be sued. She “lost complete and total control over her personal property. Her livestock, jewels, furniture, even the clothes on her back belonged to her husband.” He had complete control over the family, including the children whom he could indenture into a trade. A husband's broad powers were mediated, however, by the underlying principle on which coverture was based, the concept of “unity of person.” As explained by Marylynn Salmon, in *Women and the Law of Property in Early America*, this “goal of law, hoped for but never realized” meant that legally a man and wife constituted a partnership, albeit unequal, designed to both limit and protect women and the community.⁶ With respect to land, while a woman's real estate passed under the control of her husband as part of coverture, ownership did not. Therefore, the husband had full use of the land and received all profits derived from it but could not sell or otherwise dispense of it without his wife's consent. In the event of her death, her

⁵Donna J. Spindel, “Women's Civil Actions in the North Carolina Courts, 1670-1730,” *North Carolina Historical Review* 71 (1994): 3-4. <http://www.ah.dcr.state.nc.us/sections/hp/colonial/Nchr/Subjects/spindel.htm>. Accessed on June 17, 2005.

⁶Marylynn Salmon, *Women and the Law of Property in Early America*, (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 14-18.

property remained under his control and on his death passed to her children. The law also required men to support their wives and children and at death to devise at least two-thirds of their estates to their immediate families.⁷ “As ironic as it may seem, the same law that disabled married women was designed to protect them during their widowhood.” The widow’s protection, her dower rights, meant that she could claim one-third of her husband’s real estate and her claim took precedence over all other creditors. Furthermore, “a wife cannot be barred of her dower by the conveyance of the estate by the husband, unless she consents to it.”⁸

The records of the Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions for Washington County, North Carolina show that on Tuesday, August 25, 1778, Suzanah Robertson was privately examined and declared herself willing “that her husband Charles Robertson should convey Two certain Tracts of Land unto Joshua Houghton, viz, one for the no. 640 acres and the Other for 587.” This private examination in which she voiced her consent to the sale was a legal requirement that protected wives by prohibiting husbands from selling off what would be their future dower property.⁹ These

⁷Speth, “More Than Her ‘Thirds,’” 8-9; Spindel, “Women’s Civil Actions,” 2-3; Salmon, *Women and the Law of Property*, 16.

⁸Spindel, “Women’s Civil Action,” 3-4. In 1715 the North Carolina Assembly affirmed its support of English statute laws concerning inheritances and land titles and 1749 they affirmed a woman’s right to recover damages in a suit of dower. It also enacted a joint-deed statute that allowed husbands to transfer land as long as the wife approved and voiced that approval in a private examination by the court.

⁹John Allison, “The Records of Washington County.” *The American Historical Magazine*. V (1900): 351. See also the August session of 1784 Agnes Talbot, wife of Matthew Talbot, relinquished all right of land of her husband’s land in Virginia. There is no mention of her being privately examined. See *Washington County, Tennessee Records*, ed. Mary Hardin McCown, Nancy E. Jones Stickley and Inez E. Burns, (Johnson City, Tennessee: Privately Printed, 1964), 8.

provisions for the joint transfer of property reflect the “unity of person” concept and demonstrate that, unequal and inequitable though it seems, the law intended to provide protection for wives and to keep the financial burden of their care within the household.

The firm foundation of coverture is evident in the group of wills used for this analysis of wives and property in upper East Tennessee during the latter part of the eighteenth century. The analysis begins with the matter of language. Because the majority of the families were Protestant it is not surprising that, formulaic though it appears, eighty-five percent of the wills examined used religious language that spoke of God, judgment, grace, and heaven. Over time the overtly religious language gave way to simple statements about the finality of life and the need to put things in order. Use of religious language may give some indication of a testator’s views, reflecting his true religious feelings or only a willingness to conform to the cultural norm. Choosing not to mention God, salvation, or final judgment could indicate a lack of religious convictions or the view that one’s religious views are too personal to express in a public document. The trend from religious to secular language in these wills may reflect the fact that late colonial society in general became more affluent and more secular. Because the majority of wills did use religious language, what does it reveal about the women whose names appear in them? The pervasive use of overtly religious language establishes that the cultural norm was a Protestant, Biblical world view common to the dissenting denominations. Within these dissenting groups women experienced both equality and subjugation. In church they had spiritual equality, even while often sitting in gender-segregated pews. Women had equal standing before God, access to the Bible, if they could read, and the blessings of church membership. The same dissenting groups that placed all believers on equal footing spiritually also taught and supported a

view of family and society that was strongly patriarchal.

In Washington County, the patriarchal model reinforced by coverture laws meant that men controlled the land and determined how it was passed on. Typical of the earliest wills is that of John Wood who in 1773 said, “I give to my beloved wife...all my land with all my plantation implements.”¹⁰ He made specified gifts of money to his children and directed that his sons be bound to suitable trades.¹¹ By 1781 the first wills appear that limit a widow’s inheritance. John Paveley left his entire estate to his wife Elizabeth and named her executrix with the stipulation that should she remarry she would retain a “child’s share.”¹² The Paveleys had ten children. Christopher Cunningham left his wife Mary the “third part of everything for her lifetime,” and specific items were left to the fifteen children. Charles Hay left his “loving wife the bed on which I and she usually lies, with the blankets and sheets belonging to same, one-third of the rest of the estate, and her own clothing which she doesn’t have to bring to appraisal. She must keep the place up.”¹³ From this point to the latest wills examined for the year 1796 it became increasingly common to bequeath widows the one-third portion, a child’s portion, or some portion less than

¹⁰Lucy Gump Thesis Research Papers, 1773-1796, Inventories and Wills, part 1, 1773-1782, Box 1 Folder 1, Archives of Appalachia, East Tennessee State University. All of the wills examined and quoted in this paper are found in this collection.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² John Paveley Will, Gump Papers, Inventories and Wills, part 1, 1773-1782, Box 1 Folder 1.

¹³ Charles Hay Will, Gump Papers, Inventories and Wills, part 3, 1790-1794. Box 1 Folder 3.

the entire estate.¹⁴

What does this clear trend reveal about the position of women as the eighteenth century ended? Upper East Tennessee society grew and changed rapidly from its beginnings a decade before the American Revolution. Although still a frontier community in many respects, the families represented in these wills accumulated land, slaves (in some cases), livestock, and tools. A man with a substantial amount of property is more likely to concern himself with the disposition of that property as well as the discharge of his familial responsibilities. A review of the data in these wills does not reveal any direct correlations that explain this trend other than it reflects those of society at large as, especially in the South, patriarchal tendencies increased and in general, “eighteenth-century testators gave their widows less power over the family estates than had their seventeenth-century ancestors.”¹⁵ Examinations of men’s wills done in colonial Virginia and New England in the seventeenth century demonstrated that a widow’s age (and by extrapolation the ages of her children) proved the greatest determinant of the size and type of inheritance. Younger widows with minor children tended to receive a greater portion of estates indicating that husbands were willing to provide them with the resources needed to protect the family.¹⁶ Although the custom of primogeniture, often seen among southern planters with large plantations, was rare in

¹⁴ Excluding wills of widows and widowers, only two of nine wills (22 %) left a partial inheritance to the surviving wife but in the next twelve years, 1784 to 1796, that number increased to forty-five percent.

¹⁵ Norton, “The Evolution of White Women’s Experience,” 603.

¹⁶ Ibid., 598 footnotes. See Linda Speth, “More than her ‘Thirds’: Wives and Widows in Colonial Virginia,” *Women and History* 4 (1982): 5-41, and Kim Lacy Rogers, “Relics of the New World: Conditions of Widowhood in Seventeenth Century New England,” in Mary Kelley, ed., *Woman’s Being, Woman’s Place: Female Identity and Vocation in American History* (Boston, 1979), 26-52.

East Tennessee, sons were still favored and more likely to inherit land while widows and daughters received “movables” or cash sums.

In addition to limiting the portion of an estate that widows inherited, by 1781 a third pattern begins with the first of the wills that carry a caveat with respect to remarriage. Aaron Burleson left his estate to his wife and afterwards to his son James “at the death of my beloved wife or at her next marriage.”¹⁷ John White bequeathed to “my well beloved wife Ann one-third part of all my household furniture and stock during her remaining my widow.”¹⁸ Again, as the size and value of estates increased, so did concern for how they would be transferred and maintained.

Where coverture practices continued husbands having a reasonable expectation that their widows would remarry took the precaution of the remarriage caveat to insure that estates would remain with their descendants rather than passing to another family. The previously mentioned will of Christopher Cunningham contained a special caveat that his two married daughters were “to have no part of the legacy John Musgrove left to Mary my wife.”¹⁹ This seems to indicate that Mary had an inheritance from either a previous husband (the most probable since the two married daughters mentioned were most likely Christopher Cunningham’s from a previous marriage) or from her father. In either case, Cunningham was protecting Mary’s property from the de jure practice of coverture.

¹⁷ Aaron Burleson Will, Gump Papers, Inventories and Wills, part 1, 1773-1782, Box 1 Folder 1.

¹⁸ Ibid., John White Will.

¹⁹ Ibid., Christopher Cunningham Will

Restrictions regarding remarriage may be less about control over widows and more about protecting one's progeny, but the fourth pattern, the use of *usufruct* language, is an issue of control and reveals much about how society viewed women.²⁰ The language appears consistently throughout this group of wills.²¹ In 1796 Isabele Young was bequeathed certain animals, her bed, her own clothes, a child's share of her husband's moveables, and one-third of the land they lived on during her natural life. In addition she had the full benefits of the plantation for a term of five years after which the estate was to be divided between two sons who would by then have "come of age."²² Forty-two wills that use *usufruct* language begin with the common "I give to" and "I give and bequeath" followed at some point by the phrases "during her life," "for the term of life," or "until her decease or at her next marriage."²³ John Paveley's 1781 will states, "I give...all and singular my lands by her to be possessed and enjoyed during her life."²⁴ While giving and bequeathing speak of generosity, qualifying stipulations such as "until her decease or at her

²⁰ From the Latin *usus et fructus* meaning use and enjoyment, it bestows the legal right of using and enjoying that which belongs to another.

²¹ While the language varies, only six out of forty-eight wills do not use *usufruct* language. The first two, from 1779 and 1780 respectively, represent modest estates with no mention of children. The other four appear between 1792 and 1795 and represent one large, one small, and two moderate estates each divided between the wife and children.

²² John White Will, Gump Papers, Inventories and Wills, part 4, 1794-1796, Box 1 Folder 4;

²³ John Wood Will, Gump Papers, Inventories and Wills, part 1, 1773-1782, Box 1 Folder 1; David Crawford Will, Gump Papers, Inventories and Wills, part 2, 1781-1789, Box 1, Folder 2; and Aaron Burleson Will, Gump Papers, Inventories and Wills, part 1, 1773-1781, Box 1 Folder 1.

²⁴ John Paveley Will and John Nodding Will, Gump Papers, Inventories and Wills, part 1, 1773-1782, Box 1 Folder 1.

next marriage” speak of ongoing control.

By 1786 *usufruct* language was common and had evolved from giving land to a wife for her use during her lifetime to bequeathing a “good sufficient genteel and handsome maintenance during her life.”²⁵ Hugh Campbell’s will written in 1790 divided his plantation between his two sons and reserved to his wife “a comfortable maintenance.” In 1795 Alexander McEwen left his wife the use and enjoyment of one-third of his land and his house with improvements during her widowhood. Edmund Williams’ will written in the same year said, “to my beloved wife I lend one half of my plantation.” He also “gave” her some household goods, a horse, and a slave woman. In 1796, James Irwin bequeathed to his wife Mary his “land for use of raising our children” and gave her the use and control of his property including the right to buy and sell land for the sake of the children, but only during her widowhood. The language of these later wills reflects an escalation of the giving-but-controlling pattern that is consistent with movement toward the ever more patriarchal society that came to fruition in the Southern antebellum period.

While using language of control, these wills nonetheless consistently expressed concern and affection for wives, daughters, and mothers. In five wills of widowers, daughters were always included in the inheritance and in some cases so were sisters and mothers. In 1781 Nathan Davis divided his property among his brothers and sisters and left specific instructions that his brother Robert should “take good care of Mother.”²⁶ The growing use of *usufruct* language proclaimed the view that widows should continue as caretakers, or stewards, of a man’s estate

²⁵ Benjamin Blackburn, Gump Papers, Inventories and Wills, part 1, 1773-1782, Box 1 Folder 1.

²⁶ Nathan Davis Will, Gump Papers, Inventories and Wills, part 1, 1773-1782, Box 1 Folder 1.

and reflected the common view that wives should rightly expect financial support, but not financial autonomy.²⁷

That men were not inclined to grant women financial autonomy is an observation reinforced by the patterns found with regard to executorships. Only in the first decade were men inclined at all to name a spouse as executrix of the estate. In the few cases where it occurred there were either no children or one older son. From 1784 onward it became rare indeed and again, there were either no children or adult children with one exception. John White's will of May, 1796 names his wife Ann as executrix but also directs that all the land is to be sold as soon as "my youngest son comes of lawful age."²⁸ After the first decade men were twice as likely to name a son, a male relative, or a close friend of the family as executor as they were to name a wife co-executor. This pattern reversed in the final years, 1795-1796, when it became slightly more common to name a wife as co-executor. It seems to contradict the previously mentioned general trend toward a more patriarchal society in which men gave their widows less power. However, even when named as co-executors, women had to share power with a male chosen by their husbands. Even in those early cases mentioned, when women were given full power there were few assets, no children, or special instructions regarding the disposition of the land. Husbands continued to limit the power of widows over their estates, even as they limited the portion of widows' inheritances and placed restrictions or conditions on them.

The patterns observed in these wills demonstrate that men of sufficient substance and

²⁷ Norton, "The Evolution of White Women's Experience," 605.

²⁸ John White Will, Gump Papers, Inventories and Wills, part 1, 1794-1796, Box 1 Folder 4.

inclination wrote wills in order to direct from beyond the grave the disposition of their property. The language they used showed that for the most part they either had religious convictions, or accepted the religious framework of their culture. They also continued to function within a strong patriarchal construct so that while expressing affection and concern for their wives and children they nevertheless found ways to maintain control. Maternal responsibilities meant that in some cases widows were given more of, and more control over, a man's estate in order to properly finish the job of child rearing. Wives, however beloved, remained caretakers, or stewards, rather than owners of estates.

These wills represent a minority of families because few, in fact, wrote wills. Most men died intestate and colonial intestacy laws usually favored eldest sons over mothers and siblings.²⁹ At times women successfully sued to gain their legal portion of the estate or to be named executrix. John Fain's brief will failed to name an executor and in July 1788 "Agnes Fain qualified as executrix to said will."³⁰ Over time, as the size and value of estates in upper East Tennessee grew, so did the likelihood that sons would inherit the land, that daughters would inherit furniture or other movables, and that widows would be provided for without necessarily inheriting any property of consequence.

The same concept of "unity of person" that swallowed a wife into coverture made husbands responsible for the economic support of their wives including debts they contracted with

²⁹ Norton, "The Evolution of White Women's Experience," 603.

³⁰ John Fain Will, Gump Papers, Inventories and Wills, part 2, 1781-1789, Box 1, Folder 2.

neighbors or merchants or fines assessed by a court. As stated in Blackstone,

By marriage, the husband and wife are one person in law . . . The husband is bound to provide his wife with necessaries by law, as much as himself: and if she contracts debts for them, he is obliged to pay them; but, for anything besides necessaries, he is not chargeable. Also if a wife elopes, and lives with another man, the husband is not chargeable even for necessaries, at least if the person, who furnishes them, is sufficiently apprized of her elopement.³¹

Mary Beth Sievens' analyzed more than 1500 elopement notices in Vermont and Connecticut newspapers between 1790 and 1830 in which men renounced their legal responsibility to cover their wives' debts. Husbands, concerned about liability for debts, intended to cut off economic support to their estranged wives, a right they could legally exercise only if a wife left without cause. A wife who eloped because of a husband's cruelty or failure to adequately provide for her was legally entitled to support at his expense. Therefore, elopement notices usually began with a declaration by the husband of his innocence and her guilt in leaving without cause.³² Elopement notices appeared in East Tennessee newspapers as well. In the August 7, 1799, issue of the *Knoxville Gazette* John Dalwitt announced that his wife Nancy "eloped from his bed and board, and being solicited to return she refuses to do so." He is "determined not to pay any debts of her contracting after the date hereof. 24 June 1799." Nine years later, in August of 1808, John Davis announced "Ann Davis eloped from my bed and abode without any just cause . . . I will pay no debts of her contracting." and the following week Francis

³¹William Blackston, *Commentaries on the Laws of England in Four Books*, Vol I (Philadelphia: Robert Bell, 1771; Reprint, New York: The Layston Press, Buntingford for Oceana Publications, 1967)442-443.

³²Mary Beth Sievens, "To Assist Me in the Support of My Family": New England Women, Markets, and the Household Economy, 17980-1830, Paper presented at the Conference of the Program in Early American Economy and Society, on Friday, October 1, 2004, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Hughs declared his wife Elizabeth “left my bed and board” and forewarned the public against contracting with his wife “any amount whatsoever”³³

At times husbands sought to relieve themselves of what they considered an undue or unjust financial burden because their wives spent extravagantly, or they failed in some way to uphold their part of the marital contract. Although Sievens cites numerous examples of the extravagant spending motive in the New England newspapers, announcements found in the Knoxville papers did not mention overspending but alluded to problems other than elopement. In July 16, 1799, Edward McDaniel announced that “reasons of a serious nature oblige the subscriber to forewarn any person from trusting my wife Nancy or having any dealings with her as I am determined not to pay her contracts after this date.” And in a more enigmatic announcement in 1801 Robert Morrow said, “I find it necessary to enform [sic] the public in general that the person I took for a companion through life has in many instances come short of my expectations.” He also warned that he would not pay any of her contracts but fails to give her name.³⁴

The announcements found in the Knoxville papers attest to the fact that marital discord provoked some husbands to seek relief from their responsibility as providers and some wives to flee the protection of marriage and coverture. They do not show the ultimate outcomes for the wives involved. In the case of New England, Sievens found that some wives responded to their husbands’ postings and placed notices seeking to justify their actions by detailing their husbands’ inappropriate behavior. In cases of cruelty or lack of provision it was a way to convince the

³³ *Knoxville Gazette*, 7 August 1799; 10 August 1808; 17 August 1808.

³⁴ *ibid.*, 7 August, 1799; 14 October 1801.

community to allow them continued access to credit.³⁵ No such announcements were found in the Knoxville newspapers examined.

In February 1792, John Smith not only announced his wife's elopement and his determination not to pay her contracts, he forewarned "all persons from harboring the said Margaret or trusting her in anything on my account." Immediately below this notice the editors added, "N.B. The above Margaret is the daughter of Samuel Purcefield and his wife Nancy, near the town of Jonesborough, and is supposed to make her elopement with a certain Peter Purcefield, the said Samuel's brother's son."³⁶ This is the clearest example of a husband's legitimate claim to be excused from his provider role as the extent of the wife's abandonment appears to be widely known in the community.

In addition to a wife's spending debts, husbands were liable for her legal expenses. Washington County court records show that in 1792 Rosamond Bean had some difficulty with the law and was fined £40 and costs. Officers could not find her and issued a *capias* to collect the fine and costs from her husband Russell who was at that time in Knox County. "A stud horse was seized and sold for £13-17s and the writ returned marked 'No more property found.'"³⁷ It is not clear if Russell was confronted with his responsibility to pay for his wife's fine and refused, or if

³⁵Sievens, "To Assist Me in the Support of My Family," 3. Wives responded in approximately five percent of the cases. See note.

³⁶*Knoxville Gazette*, 7 April 1792. N. B., *note bene* a Latin expression used to call special attention to something.

³⁷Paul M. Fink, "Russell Bean, Tennessee's First Native Son," *East Tennessee Historical Society's Publications*. 37 (1965): 37.

law officers never found him, only a horse that belonged to him. Whatever the attitude of the Russell Beans toward each other, or toward the law, the court acted on the “unity of person” principle and considered Russell responsible for his wife Rosamond.

Examining wills written by men concerning the disposal of their property after death, and considering notices men wrote concerning their financial responsibilities toward wives while they still lived tell us something about how men viewed women. The documents demonstrate how the law regarding coverture and property worked in upper East Tennessee during the frontier period. We still see the face of women through male eyes. When we observe that some women chose to elope from unsatisfactory marriages, we begin to hear her voice. Her actions tell us something of her feelings, and what she determined to be her priorities.

CHAPTER 5

WOMEN'S VOICES IN WRITTEN RECORDS: COURT CASES, NEWSPAPERS, AND STORE ACCOUNTS, 1773-1809

“Despite the promise of republicanism, American independence had little direct effect on the legal status of women.”¹

Scattered written records in upper East Tennessee give a voice to women who did not write but spoke through their actions. The pages of court records from 1773 to 1810 contain references to women involved with the legal system for a variety of reasons. The available samples are small and most deal with civil issues, especially land disputes, petitions to operate businesses, and orders to build roads. They also deal with probate matters, indentures for debts and servitude, complaints of misdemeanor confrontations between citizens, and serious crimes. Women speak as both criminals and victims of crime: one murderess; two thieves; victims of assault, trespass; and illegal enslavement. Women ask for the courts' help and are required to give answer to the court. Although the common practice of indenturing children speaks to the vulnerability of women and their offspring the indenture contracts demonstrate a concern for the care, training, and future options of girls as well as boys.

In addition to court records, newspapers and store account books contain information that speak about women's lives. The *Knoxville Gazette* carried elopement announcements placed by husbands seeking to protect their financial interests and also carried notices placed by women that indicated their involvement in economic endeavors beyond the household. Store account books also give insight into the daily lives of women and provide additional evidence of their

¹Salmon, *Women and the Law of Property*, xv.

involvement in the area's growing market economy. The bits and pieces of information found in these sources add to our understanding of how women's lives worked.

The legal status of widows changed from *feme covert* to *feme sole* and gave them the same property rights as men but not necessarily the same respect. In 1771, Jacob Brown, originally from South Carolina, settled on the Nolichucky River where his log storehouse attracted both Cherokee and white settler families.¹ On March 25, 1774, Jacob negotiated the purchase of two large tracts of land from the Cherokee over the course of several days at the home of John McDowell in Burke County, North Carolina. McDowell found provisions to feed the group of about 130 and for his services was given several guns and the promise of part of the land. Jacob died intestate in 1785, and his widow Ruth was named co-executor with their son Jacob. She successfully petitioned the courts for her dower rights and worked for years to settle the estate. As Donna Spindel pointed out in her study of women's civil actions in North Carolina courts, the "handling of an estate could be a demanding job, particularly when debts had to be collected" or as in Ruth Brown's case, suits had to be defended. She received \$82.00 for her services as administrator in 1795. In 1796 John McDowell filed writs against Ruth Brown and the estate claiming he had never received the compensation Jacob Brown had promised for helping with the land purchase in 1774. Ruth, returning from a trip to South Carolina in 1796, was detained by North Carolina officials and held until she could make arrangements acceptable to John McDowell. The final outcome of McDowell's suits are unclear as are his motives in pursuing a claim made so many years after the fact, but by 1805 all claims were settled. Evidence

¹Finger, *Tennessee Frontiers*, 182. According to Finger "It is a near certainty that his customers included a slave or two . . . as well as a few female patrons who perhaps unwittingly enlarged women's traditional sphere." His sources for this information are not given.

indicates that Ruth Brown, as a widow no longer under coverture, but restored to the status of *feme sole*, successfully used the legal system to defend herself and the estate of Jacob Brown.²

Widows, although returned to *feme sole* status with regard to property, still had to abide by a husband's directives with regard to children. In February of 1782 court records show that "an orphan child named Betsey Williams the daughter of Mary Williams now Mary Newberry" was bound unto Edward Higgons "until said orphan arrive to the age of Eighteen" and that "Mary Choate and the widow or wife of John Maguff" had to show cause why "there [sic] children may not be bound out according to Law." That was the case in 1773 when John Wood stated in his will that all four of his sons "at proper age be bound to suitable trades."³ Although no wills for spouses of the above-named women are available, either the deceased husbands, or the courts decided who should raise the children, not the mothers.

Apparently Jesse Greer did not respect widows or the law that supported them. As the following case demonstrates, however, the court could use its power on behalf of a widow and did so when it "ordered that the property of Mary Dyckes be restored to her" at the February Term, 1781. Jesse Greer failed to comply with the order. At the May Term of that year the court ordered that "Jesse Greer be fined the sum of One Hundred pound for a Contempt offered to the Court &c in refusing to deliver unto the Widow Dyckes her property as Directed By Order of the

²Finger, *Tennessee Frontiers*, 45-46; Williams, *Dawn of Tennessee Valley*, 351,365; documents found in the research materials of Paul Fink in the unprocessed Fink-Dulaney Collection of the Jonesborough/Washington County Heritage Alliance, Jonesborough, Tennessee; Lucy Gump Thesis Research Papers, 1773-1796, Inventories and Wills, part 1, 1773-1782, Box 1 Folder 1, Archives of Appalachia, East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tennessee.

³Gump Papers, Box 1 Folder 1.

Court.”⁴ As John Allison explained in *Dropped Stitches in Tennessee History*, the court did not require the Widow Dyckes to hire a lawyer to bring a formal action of replevin against Greer at the February term nor did it require her to sue Greer to recover the value of her property at the May term. Being fully aware of the circumstances they used the direct method of holding Greer liable for contempt and collected the money on behalf of the widow.⁵ The records make no further mention of Mary Dyckes and do not show if she had children or any male relatives. She may have been “a widow indeed” and the court fulfilled the Biblical injunction to provide for and protect her, a manifestation of their Christian ethic and their sense of responsibility for “the peace, good fame, and welfare of the community and of individuals.”⁶

The language court scribes used as well as the kinds of crimes the court heard confirm the concern for community order. The 1797 records for the Carter County Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions contain an appearance bond for Sally Helton because “Sally Peters complains before me, Landon Carter, . . . that she hath just reason to suspect and believe that Sally Helton stole one split (?) Muslin handkerchief of her property.” Although the handkerchief stolen was valued at only six cents the case was heard and Sally Helton was convicted and ordered to make

⁴Allison, “The Records of Washington County,” *The American Historical Magazine* VI (1901): 74, 79.

⁵Ibid., V(1901): 335-336. (Allison)

⁶Ibid., 327; See I Timothy 5:3-4 KJV. Court officials and community leaders generally understood and ascribed to Biblical principles concerning family relationships that included the care of widows and orphans.

restitution. In the eyes of the court her crime of theft was not only against the victim, Sally Peters, it was “against the peace and dignity of the State of Tennessee.”⁷

More serious crimes of theft appear sometimes with correspondingly more serious punishments, but not always. Although such small samples as can be found in these records are insufficient to make any legitimate analysis they do merit consideration. In 1788, Margaret Richey was accused and duly convicted by an all male jury of “petit larceny.” “Therefore it is considered by the Court that the said deft receive ten lashes at the publick whipping post by the hour of 4 o’clock this afternoon and to remain in custody of the Sheriff until costs of the prosecution are paid.”⁸ The same book of court minutes records another case of theft by a male career criminal named Pat Murphy who received the same punishment for stealing two axes.⁹ Mary Johnson, on the other hand, pled not guilty when charged with the theft of a bag of cornmeal. Evidence produced during the trial proved her guilty and the court sentenced her to fifteen minutes in jail.¹⁰ The variation of punishments ordered for these crimes probably reflects the mood of the court at the time they were heard more than any underlying gender bias. .

⁷Watauga Historical Collection, Accession 88, Box 1, Folder 5, Archives of Appalachia, Johnson City, Tennessee.

⁸Washington County Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions, Book II, pp 290-291, Washington County Court House, Jonesborough, Tennessee.

⁹Records for the 1779 May term show Pat Murphy accused of stealing a ploughshear, hogs, and some other things and the 1781 May Term show Pat Murphy was charged by the State for stealing a bell. *Records of Washington County*, V (1900): 331 and VI (1901) 78-79 respectively..

¹⁰Miriam Fink, “Judicial Activities in Early East Tennessee,” *East Tennessee Historical Society’s Publications* VII (1935): 41.

The issue of the mood of the court and of public opinion in the community at any given time is subjective at best but may help explain the outcome of the most serious crime committed by a woman. During the years when the region was the Territory South of the Ohio River, Mary Doherty was indicted for killing her father. She did not utter a word at trial and a jury was appointed to determine whether Mary was “guilty of deception or had been struck dumb by a visitation of the Holy Spirit.” The jury concluded her mute state was an act of God, the judge entered a plea of not guilty, and she was acquitted. Apparently God reversed himself because Mary promptly recovered her powers of speech. The records do not give any information about Mary or her family history. The jurors may or may not have had some idea about what provoked her violent act. Mary may have killed her father in self defense, or in retaliation for abuse, or killed him because she was a killer. If Mary resorted to murder as result of paternal abuse, fear of public exposure in a patriarchally constructed community and the inability to prove abuse may have precluded her seeking a legal remedy.¹¹ She may have used the court to protect herself or abused it and the jurors who showed her compassion. Garthine Walker and Jenny Kermode, in their introduction to *Women, Crime and the Courts in Early Modern England*, caution against regarding women as passive players, and reference two of the book’s essays that “show how women could manipulate both the system and the expected rôle of the defenseless, dependent

¹¹See Ann Taves, ed. *Religion and Domestic Violence in Early New England: The Memoirs of Abigail Abbot Bailey* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1989) for insight into domestic violence and sexual abuse within a Protestant and patriarchal construct.

female.”¹² Both Mary Johnson the thief and Mary Doherty the murderess could have manipulated the system by playing up their defenselessness.

Victims of crime from all levels of the social hierarchy used the courts successfully to redress wrongs. At the courthouse in Jonesborough in May, 1782, attorney Luke Bowyer, Esq., entered a motion on behalf of his client Mary Handley “that she the said Mary Handley should be released and set free from an Indenture fraudulently obtained by a certain William White.” The Court took up the motion and found that Mary Handley had been illegally dealt with by William White and “by him confined and disposed of contrary to Law.” She was set at liberty and permitted to go about her “lawfull occasions.”¹³ Without additional information about the two principals in this case, conclusions are speculative. The facts as presented indicate that a woman, with no apparent support from family or other male benefactors other than the attorney, had success in an action against a man of superior social and economic rank.

Mary Handley’s desperate situation of illegal servitude stands in stark contrast with what almost seems the frivolous case of Isbel Cobb, wife of William Cobb, who was assaulted by Russell Bean in 1789. Although Russell pled not guilty, Isbel’s brother-in-law Dred Cobb provided the court with a detailed account of the assault:

. . . he saw Russell Bean taking his foot as if from Mrs. Isbel Cobb and that he concluded from the falling of his foot and Mrs. Cobb’s crying out that Russell Bean had kicked her, that he [meaning the said Russell] had kicked

¹² Laura Gowing, “Language, power, and the law: women’s slander litigation in early modern London,” in Jenny Kermode and Garthine Walker, *Women, Crime and the Courts in Early Modern England*, (Chapel Hill & London: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 26-471 and Geoffrey L. Hudson, “Negotiating for blood money: war widows and the courts in seventeenth-century England,” in Kermode, *Women and Crime*, 146-169.

¹³“Records of Washington County,” *American Historical Magazine*, VI(1901) 285.

her, and that the witness did not see Mrs. Isbel Cobb kick or strike Russell Bean, for at the time of the transaction his head was turned another way, therefore he cannot give information whether she struck or kicked him.¹⁴

The court found Bean guilty, fined him £25, and kept him in custody until the fine was paid. The dynamics of this confrontation suggest several things about domestic relationships, power, and honor within the community. First of all the case involves members of two elite families who stood at the social and economic apex of the community. The record does not state exactly where the incident occurred, but William Bean's farm was only a short distance from Rocky Mount, the Cobb plantation. Russell Bean was about twenty years old at the time and had grown up as a neighbor of the Cobb family. In his testimony, Dred Cobb said that he did not actually see Russell kick Mrs. Cobb and he did not know if she had kicked Russell first.¹⁵ Although one kick can be painful, the real issue was more likely the insult to Isbel and by extension to William Cobb. Susan Socolow, in her study of women and crime in late eighteenth-century Buenos Aires, points out that crime reflects societal values, that the administration of law could differ from its written statutes, and that class, gender, and race serve to modify the law as it applies to different individuals.¹⁶ In both Latin and Anglo European culture a man was responsible for the protection of his wife who through marriage had become one with him. A man

¹⁴Fink, "Russell Bean," *East Tennessee Historical Society's Publications* 37 (1965): 35.

¹⁵Ibid., 35. Note: Isbel Cobb, if she was the Barsheba Whitehead who bore William Cobb a son in 1751 would have been close to sixty years old and a peer of Russell's parents. See Rev. P.L. Cobb, "William Cobb—Host of Gov. Wm. Blount, His Life and Times," reprint, *The Tennessee Historical Magazine* IX (January 1926—Issued October, 1928): 1-10, *passim*.

¹⁶Susan Socolow, "Women and Crime: Buenos Aires, 1757-97," in *The Problem of Order in Changing Societies: Essays on Crime and Policing in Argentina and Paraguay, 1750-1940*, Lyman L. Johnson, ed. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1990), 1.

who did not defend his wife and his family's honor could not command respect. As result of this attack, William Cobb, together with Isbel, had little choice but to file a complaint against Russell Bean that "with Force and Arms he an assault made on her the said ISBEL and her beat, etc., against the Peace and Damage for Five Hundred Pounds."¹⁷ The sentence of a fine significantly less than the amount asked for by the plaintiffs probably was sufficient to maintain the honor of the Cobb family without doing damage to future relations between neighbors.

Issues of family honor and respect in the community also provoke defamation suits that historians use as a lens to examine the social dynamics of communities. The costs involved in prosecuting cases undoubtedly served as a deterrent and it is probable that most community struggles with gossip and defamation never went to court in upper East Tennessee. Only one defamation case appeared in the available records, but it speaks to the issue of women, their honor, and their vulnerability. The plaintiffs Jeremiah Brown and his wife Caty filed a Plea of Trespass for Defamatory words against Molly Reuble, asking \$5000.00 in damages. Molly was a minor and her father Peter Reuble was named in the complaint and designated "her Father and next friend." Jeremiah Brown and a friend Jacob Gyer signed a bond "in the penal sum of five Hundred Dollars to be void on condition that the said Jeremiah & Caty his wife doth with effect prosecute a suit by them this day commenced against the said Molly Reuble by her Father and next friend. Otherwise to pay and satisfy all costs and damages that may be awarded for failure. . . 23rd day of August 1797."¹⁸ Several things are notable. First, the husband joins his wife (who is

¹⁷Fink, "Russell Bean," 35.

¹⁸Writ, Capias, and Penal Bond, Washington County Court Records, 1780-1965. Accession #18. Subgroup A, Series A-II, Box 2. East Tennessee State University, Archives of Appalachia, Johnson City,

under coverture and unable to file suits in her own name) to initiate the complaint which is both public and expensive. Second the amount of damages asked by the plaintiffs is high enough to indicate that the insults made were serious. And third the case was prosecuted in the Superior Court which meant it was, in the eyes of the court, a serious matter on its face or was accepted by the court on appeal. The exact insults are not known, nor is the final disposition of the case. It is difficult to determine the exact value of the \$5000.00 asked in damages in the *Brown v. Reuble* case, only that the wildly inflated Continental dollars were no longer in general circulation by 1797. What can be determined is that a person's standing in small communities depended on his or her reputation and that reputation could be damaged by gossip. As Mary Beth Norton points out in her study of defamation in seventeenth century Maryland, when a woman insulted another woman it more often than not concerned sexual promiscuity. To discover what gossip results in lawsuits is to discover what types of behavior a society most abhors.¹⁹ It is generally understood that gossip was a weapon used by and against women. We cannot know whether or not Molly Reuble's charges were based on facts nor can we know why, in either case, she chose to publicly defame another woman. This defamation speaks of both a woman's honor and her vulnerability. A woman's identity was bound up with that of her husband and in turn his reputation was linked to her. A wife's bad behavior, especially sexual promiscuity, reflected on her husband to his detriment. And perhaps more importantly, a married woman depended on her husband for economic support as well as her standing in the community. If he should have cause to question

Tennessee.

¹⁹Mary Beth Norton, "Gender and Defamation in Seventeenth-Century Maryland," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 44 (January 1987): 1-9 passim. JSTOR <http://www.jstor.org/> Fri Jan 7 16:57:03 2005.

her marital fidelity, she could lose the basis of both her social standing and her economic support.²⁰ Tied up with the voices of women in the faded pages of court records are the whispers of their children. Although motherhood was the primary role of women in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, mothers often had little control over the destiny of their offspring. Women under coverture could not write wills or make contracts so husbands made the prior arrangements, if any, for the care of a couple's orphans. There were no orphanages in upper East Tennessee during this time and as a consequence orphans were frequently indentured into servitude, or apprenticeship, depending on one's point of view and the particular conditions included in the indenture documents. One indenture contract in Washington County speaks the voice of a woman and shows something of the society at the time. Dated 1785, it orders Susy McGlohlín bound to Jane English "till she attain to the age of eighteen years." It also says that Jane English will "learn the said Susy McGlohlín the art of the weaving trade" and she will "give the said Susy McGlohlín one good suit of weaving apperill at the expiration of her apprenticeship together with the common apperill."²¹ This is the only indenture examined that involves a woman as the principal to whom a child is bound. Apparently Jane English is a single woman because she is able to enter into a contract. She is also a woman who not only does weaving but has a weaving trade. As previously mentioned, weaving within the household was common in upper East Tennessee and sometimes women traded their excess products as country goods to supplement family income or earn money for themselves. A woman supporting herself as a

²⁰Ibid., 38; idem, *Founding Mothers and Fathers: Gendered Power and the Forming of American Society*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1997), 277.

²¹Washington County Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions, Book I, 265.

weaver, and having sufficient business to need help, is notable. Susy McGlohlín should benefit from this situation. Learning a trade that could provide economic independence would give her future options other than marriage.

In 1808, long after Susy McGlohlín learned the weaving trade, seven-year-old Frankey Ward was bound to Francis McFall “to live after the manner of an apprentice and servant untill said apprentice shall attain to the age of Eighteen.” The contract goes on to say that Frankey “shall faithfully serve his [McFalls’s] lawful command and everywhere gladly obey.” Further she “shall not at anytime absent herself from her said Master’s service without leave but be in all things as a good and faithful servant toward her said master.” In return Francis McFall “doth covenant and agree . . . that he will teach and cause to be taught the said Frankey Ward the art of spinning, gniting, weaving, reading and writing.” He also pledged to provide for her “sufficient diet, washing, lodging and apperil fiting for and apprentice also all other things necessary both in sickness and in health.”²² On first reading, this document, written twenty-three years after the previous one and well into the Republican period, sounds harsh in tone, especially considering the tender age of the little girl. While the language of servitude is unmistakable, the document delineates more than many such contracts, the specific things for which Francis McFall was responsible. He agreed in a legal document to provide her not only with training in the customary feminine crafts of spinning, knitting, and weaving but also promised to teach her to read and write at a time when few females were able to go to school. He also promised that she would have sufficient food, clean clothes, safe lodging, and care in sickness and in health. The

²²Watauga Historical Collection, Accession 88, Box 1, Folder 23, Archives of Appalachia, Johnson City, Tennessee.

apparent level of concern for her entire welfare within the framework of a master servant construct is fitting within the patriarchal model. Francis McFall is nothing less than a surrogate father to Frankey Ward and fathers in the early nineteenth century, just as fathers in the eighteenth century, expected to provide for their families and they expected to be in control of them. If McFall complied with the terms to which he agreed, the orphaned girl child would fare as well or better than many of her peers and, learning both a trade and how to read and write would give her more future options as well.

As the eighteenth century came to a close and the nineteenth century opened, regional growth and economic expansion brought changes and opportunities for some women. Their voices speak in the public arena of newspapers. Through notices they placed we learn that women were involved in activities beyond their normal household sphere and that they had some measure of independence. On January 19, 1796, Elizabeth Ifa announced an \$8.00 reward for the return of her horse, a sorrel, stolen in Blount County. It is not remarkable that Elizabeth Ifa owned a horse, but the fact that the notice was in her name and offered a monetary reward indicates that she had some measure of financial freedom.²³ Anne Wood's notice in the April 16, 1800 edition of the *Impartial Observer and Knoxville Gazette* began with the word CAUTION in bold print. It warned the public not to harbor her "Negro fellow Will. . . as they will have to answer it at their peril." This concise statement tells us that Anne Wood apparently owned Will and that her legal status would allow her to prosecute anyone who violated her rights to her

²³*Knoxville Gazette*, January 19, 1796, page 2.

property. It can be assumed that the loss of Will's labor would have had an effect on Anne Wood's financial interests sufficient to prompt the public warning.²⁴

A similar "notice not to harbor" appeared in the October 14, 1801, edition of the *Knoxville Gazette*, but was placed by a man, Daniel Whyte, regarding his indentured servant from Ireland named Biddy Colliert. Although she "absconded from my house, she is a good thorough servant and an excellent spinner." Perhaps Biddy Colliert escaped into the arms of a husband who would take care of her. She would otherwise be very vulnerable at a time when few women lived outside of a family network.²⁵

On April 16, 1800, a Mrs. Miller advertised her school that would teach young ladies all kinds of needlework for \$5.50 a year. "Young ladies from the county will be accommodated with boarding at two dollars per week, on condition it cannot be had elsewhere." The use of the title Mrs. with a surname indicates that the proprietor of the school was a married woman or a widow. She apparently had a house of sufficient size to accept boarders although she did not mention a maximum number, only that boarding was the last recourse for out of town students. It would be reasonable to expect that Mrs. Miller, if a widow, would seek a way to generate income. In either case, however, she was a woman running a business.²⁶ Another woman, definitely a widow, announced her business on October 14, 1801. "Mrs. Campbell informs the public that the house of entertainment at the sign of the BUCK which was kept by her late husband, Richard Campbell

²⁴*Impartial Observer and Knoxville Gazette*, April 16, 1800, page 2.

²⁵*Knoxville Gazette*, October 14, 1801, page 3.

²⁶*Impartial Observer and Knoxville Gazette*, April 16, 1800, page 2.

will by kept by her.” Because a widow reverted to the legal status of *feme sole* with the freedom to do business and make contracts, it was not unusual for a woman to carry on with a husband’s business that had been the source of their livelihood.

This handful of newspaper notices shows that women were involved in economic activities beyond the household. They also speak of women’s vulnerability as the social and economic landscape was changing. The statistical data necessary to develop a solid demographic profile of upper East Tennessee during the early years of statehood are not available, however, according to John Finger, during the first half of 1798 emigration into Tennessee was beyond expectations and the population increased by thirty percent during the first four years of statehood. The high sex ratios of the earlier years meant that widows usually remarried quickly or if not, they lived as dependents within the household of some male relative. Even with sex ratios at parity most younger widows remarried while older widows lived within the household of a relative. The exception would be wealthy widows who were heads of households.²⁷ Widows in business may be an indication that when frontier families left wider kin groups behind widows had to either remarry or fend for themselves. The newly found independence may have been tempered by the necessity to compete for economic resources, an unfamiliar role.²⁸

²⁷For discussions of the demographics of households and the effects of sex ratios on households see Kathleen Marie Fawver, “‘Lords of Creation’: Household and Family Structure in the Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake,” (Ph.D. diss., University of California Riverside, 2002), 225-228; idem, “Women in Planter Households: The Organization of Labor in the Eighteenth-Century Northern Chesapeake,” Conference of the Program in Early American Economy and Society, Philadelphia, October 1, 2004, 3,5,9; and Norton, “Evolution of White Woman’s Experience,” 596-601.

²⁸Finger, *Tennessee Frontiers*, 210-211. The use of the term frontier at this point reflects the conditions common to rapidly growing communities of new immigrant families. Many scholars use 1840 to mark the end of the frontier period in Tennessee history.

The widow Campbell and Mrs. Miller were situated in the relatively urban environment of Knoxville, the capital of Tennessee at that time. The voice of a rural woman can be heard, perhaps humming a similar tune since her situation appears to be closely linked to theirs. In May 1803, Mrs. Abigail Webster received credit to her account at Cheek's Crossroads store for making overalls for E. Williams and again in July "for making 2 pr overalls for boy." Abigail Webster traded there regularly, had an account in her name, and bought a great deal of yard goods and sewing notions. She often sent one of her daughters, or a son, to make her purchases.²⁹ These facts suggest that Abigail Webster was a widow with children to support and, in addition to whatever farm the family was working, she had a business sewing for others. She may have needed to earn money by sewing for others if the farm did not produce an adequate living for her family.³⁰

The voice of Abigail Webster is one of many that can be found in the pages of country store account books. Two account books for stores owned by David Deaderick, a resident of Jonesborough, are rich in detail about the trading patterns and daily lives of residents in upper East Tennessee.³¹ This store was managed by several different partners of David Deaderick. Both books show that in the first years of the nineteenth century men did most of the trading. Deaderick's day book shows Russell Bean making a purchase on February 27, 1800. His name

²⁹Ann K. Blomquist, ed. *Cheek's Cross Roads, Tennessee, Store Journal 1802-1807*, (Baltimore: Gateway Press, Inc., 2001), 158, 180 and 183.

³⁰Abigail Webster is sometimes listed as Mrs. Abigail Webster. It seems to depend on which of David Deaderick's partners was keeping the book.

³¹Blomquist, *Cheek's Cross Roads Store Journal; David Deaderick Daybook, 1800-1801*, Fink and Dulaney Papers, The Special Collections Library of The University of Tennessee MS 2018. Knoxville, Tennessee .

does not appear again until October 6, 1801, when he purchased a double bladed knife and a pocket knife. This interval corresponds to the nearly two years he was away on business in New Orleans. During his absence there are numerous entries under the name Mrs. Bean.³²

A summary of the activity for the first week of January 1800 at David Deaderick's Jonesborough store shows that women sewed at home, that people desired and were able to purchase spices, tea, coffee and other things from far away to make life easier and more interesting. Ten different customers made purchases that included coffee, snuff, a twist of tobacco, sugar, tea, black pepper, buttons and pins, 3 ½ yards of coating material and 2 yards of red flannel, an Indian blanket, a set of knives and forks, a Jews harp, a fine comb, and 2 spelling books. The Cheek's Crossroads records show the same kinds of activity and contain a wide range of merchandise from whiskey to brass cupboard hinges, from silk ribbons to *The Baltimore Hymn Book*, from scythes to china cups and saucers. A number of accounts show that women traded country goods such as eggs, butter, and hand woven linen. Abigail Webster was not alone in sewing for others. Charles T. Porter's account shows that on June 7, 1803, he paid \$12.00 to a Mrs. Donaldson for making shirts. The patrons of Cheek's Cross Roads Store bought the Knoxville newspapers, the *British Spy*, a weekly from London and another weekly, the *Universal Gazette*. They also bought as well a wide variety of books dealing with such things as vocal music techniques, the art of horse shoeing, elocution, surveying, gardening, family medicine,

³²*David Deaderick Daybook*. The purchase of knives is not necessarily remarkable, however, on the following February 12, 1802, a warrant was issued for the arrest of Russell Bean who had in a rage "feloniously and on purpose maimed and disfigured an infant child by having cut off both its ears." The child was conceived and born to Bean's wife Rosamund during his absence. See Paul M. Fink, *Jonesborough: the First Century of Tennessee's First Town, 1776-1876*, (Johnson City, Tennessee: The Overmountain Press, 1989), 99. The court documents referenced in this book and other articles written by Paul Fink regarding Russell Bean are in the Fink Collection of the McClung Historical Library, Knoxville, Tennessee.

humor and politics. *Pilgrims Progress*, the *Works of Aristotle* in 4 volumes, *Aesop's Fables*, and *The History of the Devil and Dr. Faustus* appear as well as many books on religion, Bibles, and several different hymnals.³³ The purchases of books and luxury goods were made by elite families who were educated and able to educate their children. While these store records show that upper East Tennessee was connected economically to a growing market system with national and international links the majority of the families trading there were yeoman farmers. A wide variety of products were offered and people were buying them. The standard of living for elites and yeoman farmers was changing. The voices from the courts, the newspapers, and the store account books tell us that some women were moving beyond the household but most women continued to be dependent and vulnerable, speaking with tentative voices.

³³Blomquist, *Cheek's Cross Roads Store Journal*.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

In her book, *Founding Mothers & Fathers*, Mary Beth Norton relates the experience of George Alsop, a resident of Maryland, who in 1666 shared his observations of the Algonkian gender system of labor with his English readers. He told them that women were “Butchers, Cooks, and Tillers of the ground” and men considered anything other than hunting to be “below the honour of a Masculine.” Alsop was careful to report, however, that “I never observed . . . that ever the Women wore the Breeches, or dared either to look or action predominate over the Men.” George Alsop, a European man who lived in a patriarchally constructed world, went on to explain that “despite their work roles Algonkian women were simply—in his words—‘ingenious and laborious Housewives,’ rather than competitors for the power that properly resided in male hands.”³⁴

George Alsop observed a group of people whose division of labor was contrary to his notion of what was proper. Men in his world tilled the soil and “wore the Breeches” and dominated over women. He was able to accept the Algonkian system, however, when he realized that although the women did men’s work, they did not exercise control over them. In other words, as long as Algonkian women were another sort of housewife, his patriarchal world remained intact.

The patriarchal world of George Alsop lived on through the eighteenth century, it came to upper East Tennessee with the first families who settled the valleys and ridges east of the

Mary Beth Norton, *Founding Mothers & Fathers: Gendered Power and the Forming of American Society*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1997), 6.

Unakas. In examining the place of women in upper East Tennessee from first settlement in 1770 to 1810 three conclusions are reasonable. First women lived and worked primarily within the household as did the majority of women in the eighteenth century. Regional differences and extenuating circumstances sometimes altered the activities in which women were involved. The legal status of women, their roles within the household, their husband's attitudes toward them, and their place in the community remained essentially the same whether they lived in New England, the Chesapeake, or the valleys of upper East Tennessee.

The body of evidence examined to profile the place of women in early upper East Tennessee includes some recent research by women who mined all sorts of public records. Their findings show that women from a variety of backgrounds contributed to and participated in the expansion of the market economy from the British colonial period through the early nineteenth century. The evidence specific to upper East Tennessee is limited to the store account books that show citizens purchasing goods from markets in the east and selling surplus products to the local store. Some women made purchases in their own names, some traded country goods for cash or credit, and at least two sold the shirts and overalls they made. This small sample is consistent with patterns found in other areas. The patterns suggest that although women engaged in economic activities beyond the household they participated in gender defined ways. Women marketed surplus products they produced at home, they taught other women, and they operated taverns and inns.

Although the survival mode of the first decades altered the negotiation of gender and class in economic and social contexts, the lives of most women, whether married or single, remained rooted within the household. Mary McKeehan Patton learned the art of gunpowder making in her

youth and with her husband operated a powder mill not far from Sycamore Shoals. She is credited with making at least five hundred pounds of gunpowder that was critically needed by the Overmountain Men who fought and defeated the British at King's Mountain. Mary Patton was a wife, mother, and grandmother who also made and sold gunpowder. There is nothing to indicate that she ever functioned independently of her family.³⁵

One of the difficulties of profiling women in history derives from the fact that so much history is written by men, about men, and from a male perspective. In 1893, Frederick Jackson Turner presented his view of the frontier as a place that fomented democracy, a view that overlooked women. In 1985, Jack P. Greene wrote "Perhaps the most powerful drive in the British-American colonizing process . . . was the drive for personal *independence*. Quite simply, *independence* meant freedom from the will of others."³⁶ The essay deals with the Southern backcountry during the American Revolution and describes the broad framework of the colonization process and the drive for independence. Greene is speaking about collective society and the broad sweep of history over time and his statements are generalizations. These generalizations exclude women, however, who between 1770 and 1810, had no political voice. Married women had no legal identity and with rare exception women had no economic independence. The drive and the motivation Jack Greene wrote about was the province of white males. In the search for the face and voice of women in early upper East Tennessee one has to

³⁵Robert A Howard and E. Alvin Gerhardt, Jr. *Mary Patton: Powder Maker of the Revolution*, (Johnson City, Tennessee: Rocky Mount Historical Association, 1980), 1-3.

³⁶Jack P. Greene, "Independence, Improvement, and Authority: Toward a Framework for Understanding the Histories of the Southern Backcountry during the Era of the American Revolution," in *An Uncivil War: The Southern Backcountry during the American Revolution*, eds. Ronald Hoffman, Thad W. Tate and Peter J. Albert (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1985), 12.

remember that with the exception of a handful of newspaper notices that could have been written by the women who placed them, all the evidence from wills and court documents was written by men.

The faces and voices of women in upper East Tennessee are seen and heard most clearly in the court records examined. The profile that emerges is still incomplete because the evidence derives from a small group of women, and in the case of the wills, elite women. The language used in the wills and by court scribes reflects the Protestant patriarchal construct of Tennessee society. The actions of the court show that the male dominated community usually protected and provided for women. From the beginning of settlement in upper East Tennessee through the first decade of the nineteenth century, the legal standing of women changed little.

In the forty years from first settlement in 1770 to 1810, upper East Tennessee developed into a stable region with a growing population and diversified, but still primarily agrarian, economy. “In the eighteenth-century America, women’s lives centered upon their homes.” In the first decade of the nineteenth century, most women’s lives still centered on their homes and families. The underlying attitudes about the place of women in the society of upper East Tennessee did not significantly change. They did not change because they were solidly embedded in the patriarchal construct that formed the basis of the culture the settlers left behind, the culture they brought with them and the culture that continued to prevail.³⁷

³⁷Norton, *Liberty’s Daughters*, xiii.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRIMARY SOURCES

- Allison, John. "The Records of Washington County." *The American Historical Magazine*. V (1900):326-381.
- "Articles of School-Keeping" copy of 1802 contract for schoolmaster Philip Denham, found in Fink-Dulaney Collection. Jonesborough/Washington Country Heritage Alliance.
- Asbury, Bishop Francis. "Journal of Francis Asbury 1788-1800." in *Early Travels in the Tennessee Country, 1540-1800* by Samuel Cole Williams. Johnson City, Tennessee: The Watauga Press, 1928, 291-313.
- Burgner, Goldene Fillers. *Washington County, Tennessee Marriages, 1780-1870*. Easley, South Carolina: Southern Historical Press, Inc., 1985.
- _____. *Washington County Tennessee Wills: 1777-1877*. Easley, South Carolina: Southern Historical Press, 1983.
- Blomquist, Ann K., ed. *Cheek's Cross Roads, Tennessee, Store Journal 1802-1807*. Baltimore: Gateway Press, 2001.
- Deaderick, David. Daybook used in store of David Deaderick, 1800-1801. Fink and Dulaney Papers
The Special Collections Library of The University of Tennessee MS 2018. Knoxville, Tennessee.
- Donelson, John. *Three Pioneer Tennessee Documents: Donelson's Journal; Cumberland Compact; Minutes of Cumberland Court*. Nashville: The Tennessee Historical Commission, 1964.
- Gump, Lucy Kennerly. Thesis Research Papers, Washington County Inventories and Wills, 1773-1797. Box 1 Folders 1-6. Archives of Appalachia, East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tennessee.
- Impartial Observer-Knoxville Gazette*. 1800-1801.
- Knoxville Gazette*. 1792; 1796;1799.
- McCown, Mary Hardin, Nancy E. Jones Stickley and Inez E. Burns, comps. *Washington County, Tennessee Records*. Johnson City, Tennessee: Privately Printed, 1964.
- Washington County Court Records, Volumes I and II. Office of the County Clerk, Jonesborough, Tennessee.
- Washington County Court Records, 1780-1965. Accession #18. Subgroup A, Series A-II, Box 2. East Tennessee State University, Archives of Appalachia, Johnson City, Tennessee.
- Watauga Historical Association Collection, 1796-1891. Accession #88. Box 1, Folders 5, 23, 24. East Tennessee State University, Archives of Appalachia, Johnson City, Tennessee.
- Wilson's Knoxville Observer*. 1808-1809.

- Wollstonecraft, Mary. *A Vindication of the Rights of Women: An Authoritative Text Backgrounds, Criticism*. Carol H. Poston, ed. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1975.
- _____. [Godwin] *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters with Reflections on Female Conduct in The more important Duties of Life*. Reprinted from the First Edition 1787. Clifton, New Jersey: Augustus M. Kelley Publishers, 1972.
- _____. *The Collected Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft*. ed. Janet Todd. New York: Columbia University Press, 2003.

SECONDARY SOURCES

- Abernathy, Thomas Perkins. *From Frontier to Plantation in Tennessee: A Study in Frontier Democracy*. Memphis: Memphis State College Press, 1955.
- Allison, John. *Dropped Stitches in Tennessee History*. Nashville: Blue and Gray Press, 1971.
- Arnold, Richard. *English Hymns of the Eighteenth Century: An Anthology*. New York: Peter Lang, 1991.
- Bailyn, Bernard. *The Peopling of British North America: An Introduction*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1986.
- Beeman, Richard W. review of *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* by Linda K. Kerber; *Liberty's Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women, 1750-1800* by Mary Beth Norton. *Reviews in American History* 9 (September 1981): 336-341.
- Blackstone, William. *Commentaries of the Laws of England in Four Books*. Philadelphia: Robert Bell, 1771; reprint, New York: The Layston Press, Buntingford for Oceana Publications, Inc., 1967.
- Caruso, John Anthony. *The Appalachian Frontier: America's First Surge Westward*, with a new introduction by John Inscoe. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2003.
- Cary, John H., et al. eds. *The Social Fabric: American Life from 1607 to 1877*. New York: Harper Collins College Publishers, 1995.
- Christ-Janer, Albert, Charles W. Hughes and Carleton Sprague Smith. *American Hymns Old and New*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1980.
- Cobb, Rev. P. L. *William Cobb--Host of Gov. Wm. Blount: His Life and Times*. Reprint from *The Tennessee Historical Magazine* IX (January 1926--Issued October 1928).
- Cott, Nancy F. *The Bonds of Womanhood: "Women's Sphere" in New England, 1780-1835*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1977.
- Cox, Joyce and W. Eugene, comps and eds. *History of Washington County Tennessee*. Johnson City, Tennessee: The Overmountain Press, 2001.

- Crass, David Colin, Steven D. Smith, Martha A. Zierdan, and Richard D. Brooks, eds. *The Southern Colonial Backcountry: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1998.
- Dexter, Elisabeth Anthony. *Colonial Women of Affairs: Women in Business and the Professions in America Before 1776*. Clifton, New Jersey: Augustus M. Kelley Publishers, 1972.
- Dulaney, Miriam Fink. "Judicial Activities in Early East Tennessee." *The East Tennessee Historical Society's Publications*. VII (1935): 38-49.
- Dunaway, Wilma A. *The First American Frontier: Transition to Capitalism in Southern Appalachia, 1700-1860*. Fred W. Morrison Series in Southern Studies Publication. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996.
- _____. "The Southern Fur Trade And The Incorporation Of Southern Appalachia Into The World-Economy, 1690-1763". *Review* 17 (Fernand Braudel Center 1994): 215-242.
- Dykeman, Wilma. *Tennessee: A Bicentennial History*. American Association for State and Local History, Nashville. New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1975.
- Fawver, Kathleen Marie. "Lord's of Creation": Household and Family Structure in the Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake. Dissertation, University of California Riverside, 2002.
- _____. "Women's Economies in the Chesapeake: The Organization of Labor in a Plantation Society." Paper presented at the Program for Early American Economy and Society, October 1, 2004, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
- Finger, John R. *Tennessee Frontiers: Three Regions in Transition*, History of the Trans-Appalachian Frontier Series. Walter Nugent and Malcolm Rohrbough, eds. Bloomington: Indiana University. Press, 2001.
- Fink, Paul M. *Jonesborough: The First Century of Tennessee's First Town*, Second Edition. Johnson City, Tennessee: The Overmountain Press, 1989.
- _____. "Russell Bean, Tennessee's First Native Son." *The East Tennessee Historical Society's Publications*. 37 (1965): 31-48.
- Fischer, David Hackett. *Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in America*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989.
- Greene, Jack P. *Interpreting Early America: Historical Essays*. Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1996.
- Groneman, Carol and Mary Beth Norton. *"To Toil the Livelong Day: " America's Women at Work, 1790-1980*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1987.
- Gump, Lucy Kennerly. "Possessions and Patterns of Living in Washington County: The 20 Years Before Statehood." Master's thesis, East Tennessee State University, 1989.
- Harkness, David J. *Colonial Heroines of Tennessee, Kentucky, and Virginia*, a Bicentennial Publication, Knoxville, University of Tennessee Press, 1974.

- Hartigan-O'Connor, Ellen. "She Said She Did Not Know Money": Urban Women and Atlantic Markets. Paper presented at the Program for Early American Economy and Society, October 1, 2004, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
- Heiskell, S.G. *Andrew Jackson and Early Tennessee History*. Volume 1 Second Edition. Nashville: Ambrose Printing Company, 1920.
- Heyrman, Christine Leigh. *Southern Cross: The Beginnings of the Bible Belt*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997.
- Hinderaker, Eric and Peter C. Mancall. *At the Edge of Empire: The Backcountry in British North America*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003.
- Hoff, Joan. *Law, Gender, and Injustice: A Legal History of U.S. Women*. New York: New York University Press, 1991.
- Hoff-Wilson, Joan. review of *Liberty's Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience American Women, 1750-1800* by Mary Beth Norton, and *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* by Linda K. Kerber. *Signs* (Summer 1982): 880-886.
- Hoffman, Ronald, Thad W. Tate and Peter J. Albert, eds. *An Uncivil War: The Southern Backcountry during the American Revolution*. Published for the United State Capitol Historical Society. Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia, 1985.
- Holt, Alfred C. "The Economic and Social Beginnings of Tennessee, *Tennessee Historical Magazine*, 7 (October 1921): 252-313.
- Howard, Robert A. And E. Alvin Gerhardt, Jr. *Mary Patton: Powder Maker of the Revolution*. Johnson City, Tennessee: Rocky Mount Historical Association, 1980.
- Hsiung, David C. *Two Worlds in the Tennessee Mountains: Exploring the Origins of Appalachian Stereotypes*. Lexington: The University of Kentucky press, 1997.
- Kay, Jeanne. "Landscapes of Women and Men: rethinking the regional historical geography of the Unites States and Canada." *Journal of Historical Geography*. 17 (Fall 1991): 435-452.
- James, Janet Wilson. *Changing Ideas About Women in the United States, 1776-1825*. New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1981.
- Kermode, Jenny and Garthine Walker, eds. *Women, Crime and the Courts in Early Modern England*. Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1994.
- Lebergott, Stanley. review of *Inheritance in America from Colonial Times to the Present* by Carole Shammas. *The American Historical Review* 94 (February 1989): 2-3-2-4.
- Lenz, Richard. "Upper Unaka Mountains." http://sherpaguides.com/tennessee/upper_unakas/. Published (Web): January 2003.
- Lerner, Gerda. *The Creation of Patriarchy*. New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986..
_____. *The Majority Finds Its Past: Placing Women in History*. New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979.

- _____. review of *Womanhood in America: From Colonial Times to the Present* in *The Journal of American History*. 63 (June 1976): 96-97.
- Leonard, Bill J. ed. *Christianity in Appalachia: Profiles in Regional Pluralism*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1999.
- MacRae, Ann Cameron. "Women at the Loom: Handweaving in Washington County, Tennessee, 1840-1860." Master's thesis, East Tennessee State University, 2001.
- Marini, Stephen. "Hymnody as History: Early Evangelical Hymns and the Redovery of American Popular Religion," *Church History*. 72 (June 2002): 273-307.
<http://infotrac.galegroup.com.ezproxy.etsu.edu.2048/itw/infomark/237/635/92792528w3/p>
 Accessed April 40, 2005.
- McCurry, Stephanie, *Masters of Small Worlds: Yeoman Households, Gender Relations, and the Political Culture of the Antebellum South Carolina Low Country*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.
- Miller, Marla R. "The Last Mantuamaker: Craft Tradition and Commercial Change in Boston, 1760-1840. Paper presented at the Program for Early American Economy and Society, October 1, 2004, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
- Nash, Gary B. *Red, White and Black: The Peoples of Early North America*. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2000.
- Nobles, Gregory H. "Breaking into the Backcountry: New Approaches to the Early American Frontier, 1750-1800." *William and Mary Quarterly*. 46 (October 1989): 641-670.
- _____. "Frederick Jackson Turner: Deposed King of the Wild Frontier." *Hayes Historical Journal* 12(1991-1993):7-19.
- Norton, Mary Beth. "Youthful Men and Domestic Women." *Reviews in American History*. 6 (June 1978): 171-177.
- _____. *Liberty's Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women, 1750-1800*. Boston-Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1980.
- _____. "The Evolution of White Women's Experience in Early America." *The American Historical Review*. 89 (June 1984): 593-619.
- _____. *Founding Mothers & Fathers: Gendered Power and the Forming of American Power*. New York: Vintage Books, 1997.
- _____. "Historically Speaking: An Interview with Mary Beth Norton." by Ben Barker-Benfield. *Journal for MultiMedia History*. 3 (2000): 1-11.
<http://www.albany.edu/jmmh/vol3/norton/norton.html> Accessed 5/21/1005.
- Ogasapian, John. *Music of the Colonial and Revolutionary Era*. American History through Music. David J. Brinkman, Series Editor. Westport, Connecticut and London: Greenwood Press, 2004.
- Otto, John Solomon. "The Migration of the Southern Plain Folk: An Interdisciplinary Synthesis," *The Journal of Southern History*. 51 (May 1985): 183-200.

- Owsley, Frank Lawrence. *Plain Folk of the Old South*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1949.
- Perdue, Theda. *"Mixed Blood" Indians: Racial Construction in the Early South*. Athens and London: The University of Georgia Press, 2003.
- Pudup, Mary Beth, Dwight B. Billings and Altina L. Walker, eds. *Appalachia in the Making: The Mountain South in the Nineteenth Century*.
- Reeve, Tapping. *The Law of Baron and Femme*. Third Edition. Albany: William Gould, Law Publisher, 1862; reprint, New York: Source Book Press, 1970.
- Rogers, Kim Lacy. "Relics of the New World: Conditions of Widowhood in Seventeenth Century New England," in Mary Kelley, ed., *Woman's Being, Woman's Place: Female Identity and Vocation in American History* Boston: Hall, 1979. 26-52.
- Salmon, Marylynn. "Women and Property in South Carolina: The Evidence from Marriage Settlements, 1730 to 1830." *William and Mary Quarterly*. 39 (October 1982): 655-685.
- _____. *Women and the Law of Property in Early America*. Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1986.
- Sanday, Peggy Reeves. *Female Power and Male Dominance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).
- Shammas, Carole. "Carole Shammas Responds." *The William and Mary Quarterly* 52 (January 1995): 163-166.
- _____. review of "New World Economies: The Growth of the Thirteen Colonial and Early Canada" in *William and Mary Quarterly*. 56 (October 1999): 833-835.
- _____. "English Inheritance Law and Its Transfer to the Colonies," *The American Journal of Legal History*. 31 (April 1987): 145-163.
- Silverman, Kenneth. *A Cultural History of the American Revolution: Painting, Music, Literature, and the Theater in the Colonies and the United States from the Treaty of Paris to the Inauguration of George Washington, 1763-1789*. New York: T.Y. Crowell, 1976.
- _____. *Literature in America*. New York: Free Press, 1971.
- Sievens, Mary Beth. "'To Assist Me in the Support of My Family': New England Women, Markets, and the Household Economy, 1790-1830." Paper presented at the Program for Early American Economy and Society, October 1, 2004, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
- Smith, Barbara Ellen, " 'Beyond the Mountains': The Paradox of Women's Place in Appalachian History." *National Women's Studies Journal* 11.3 (1999): 1-17.
- Socolow, Susan Migden. "Women and Crime: Buenos Aires, 1757-97." *The Problem of Order in Changing Societies: Essays on Crime and Policing in Argentina and Paraguay, 1750-1940*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1990.
- Speth, Linda. "More than her 'Thirds': Wives and Widows in Colonial Virginia," *Women and History* 4 (1982): 5-41.

- Spindel, Donna J. "Women's Civil Actions in the North Carolina Higher Courts, 1670-1730." *North Carolina Historical Review* 71 (1994): 151-173.
<http://www.ah.dcr.state.nc.us/sections/hp/colonial/Nchr/Subjects/spindel.htm>. Accessed June 3, 2005.
- Taves, Ann. Ed. *Religion and Domestic Violence in Early New England: The Memoirs of Abigail Abbot Bailey*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1989.
- Taylor, George Rogers. *The Turner Thesis: Concerning the Role of the Frontier in American History*. Problems in American History Series. Boston: D.C. Heath and Company, 1956.
- Turner, Frederick Jackson. *"History, Frontier and Section: Three Essays"*. ed. and with introduction by Martin Ridge. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1993.
<http://www.netlibrary.com/Reader/>, accessed May 28, 2005.
- Ulrich, Laurel Thatcher. *Good Wives: Images and Reality in the Lives of Women in Northern New England 1650-1750*. New York: Vintage Books, 1991.
- Vernier, Chester G. *American Family Laws: A Comparative Study of the Family Law of the Forty-eight American States, Alaska, the District of Columbia, and Hawaii (to Jan. 1, 1935)* Volume III [Husband and Wife] Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, Publishers, 1935; Reprint, First Greenwood, 1971.
- Watson, Alan D. "Women in Colonial North Carolina: Overlooked and Underestimated." *North Carolina Historical Review* 58 (1981): 1-22.
<http://www.ah.dcr.state.nc.us/sections/hp/colonial/Nchr/Subjects/watson3.htm>. Accessed June 3, 2005.
- Weeks, Terry and Bob Womack. *Tennessee: The History of an American State*. Montgomery, Alabama: Clairmont Press, 1996.
- Wigger, John H. *Taking Heaven By Storm: Methodism and the Rise of Popular Christianity in America*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001..
- Williams, Samuel Cole, LL.D. *Dawn of Tennessee Valley and Tennessee History*. Johnson City, Tennessee: The Watauga Press, 1937.
- _____. *Ann Robertson: An Unsung Tennessee Heroine*. Nashville: The Tennessee Historical Commission, 1944.
- _____. *Tennessee During the Revolutionary War*. Nashville: The Tennessee Historical Commission, 1944.
- _____. *William Tatham, Wataugan*. Johnson City, Tennessee: Watauga Press, 1947.
- _____. *Early Travels in the Tennessee Country, 1540-1800*. Nashville: Blue and Gray Press, 1972.
- _____. *History of the Lost State of Franklin*. Johnson City, Tennessee: Overmountain Press, 1993.
- Williams, John Alexander. *Appalachia: A History*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002.

VITA

SÄNDRA LEE ALLEN HENSON

EDUCATION

A. A. in International Studies, Cochise College, Douglas, Arizona, 1997
B.A in Latin American Studies, University of Arizona, Tucson, Arizona, 1999 Summa Cum Laude
M.A. in History, East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tennessee 2002,
Thesis: Dead Bones Dancing: The Taki Onqoy, Archaism, and Crisis in Sixteenth Century Peru
M.A. in Liberal Studies, East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tennessee , 2005
Concentration: Archival Studies, Thesis: To See Her Face, To Hear Her Voice: Profiling Women
in Early Upper East Tennessee, 1770-1810

RELEVANT EXPERIENCE

Instructor; East Tennessee State University, Survey of United States History, 2001-2002
Assistant to Managing Editor, Encyclopedia of Appalachia at CASS
Instructor; East Tennessee State University, Spanish II, Spring 2005
Archival Internship, Jonesborough/Washington County Heritage Alliance 2005

PUBLICATIONS

Henson, Sändra. "From the Desert in Bloom to Cowboy Coffee." *Cochise County Historical Journal*. 29
(Spring-Summer 1999): 56-64.
Henson, Sändra. "Argentina." and "Buenos Aires" in *Encyclopedia of Colonialism*, ed. Melvin E. Page.
Santa Barbara: ABC-Clio, 2003.
Henson, Sändra. "Ozzie Newsome," "Appalachian School of Law," and "Women's Organizations" in the
Encyclopedia of Appalachia, Spring 2005.

PAPERS PRESENTED

2001 Ohio Valley History Conference, "Wherefore Do You Suffer the Whites to Dwell Upon Your
Lands?": Neolin and Archaism Among the Delaware 1760-1765.
2002 Tennessee Regional Phi Alpha Theta Conference, "Taki Onqoy and the Decade of Crisis, 1560-
1570."
2003 International Congress of Americanists, Santiago, Chile, "Dead Bones Dancing: The Taki Onqoy,
Millenarian Movements and Archaism in the American Frontier"
2005 Appalachian Studies Association, Radford University, "A good sufficient genteel and
handsome maintenance during her life:" Profiling Women in Early Upper East
Tennessee Through their Husband's Wills, 1773-1796.

HONORS AND AWARDS

1997 All Arizona Academic Team
2000 Phi Alpha Theta History Honor Society
2001 Barbara Jaffe Silvers Graduate Memorial Fellowship
2001 University Libraries Advisory Council
2002 Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society